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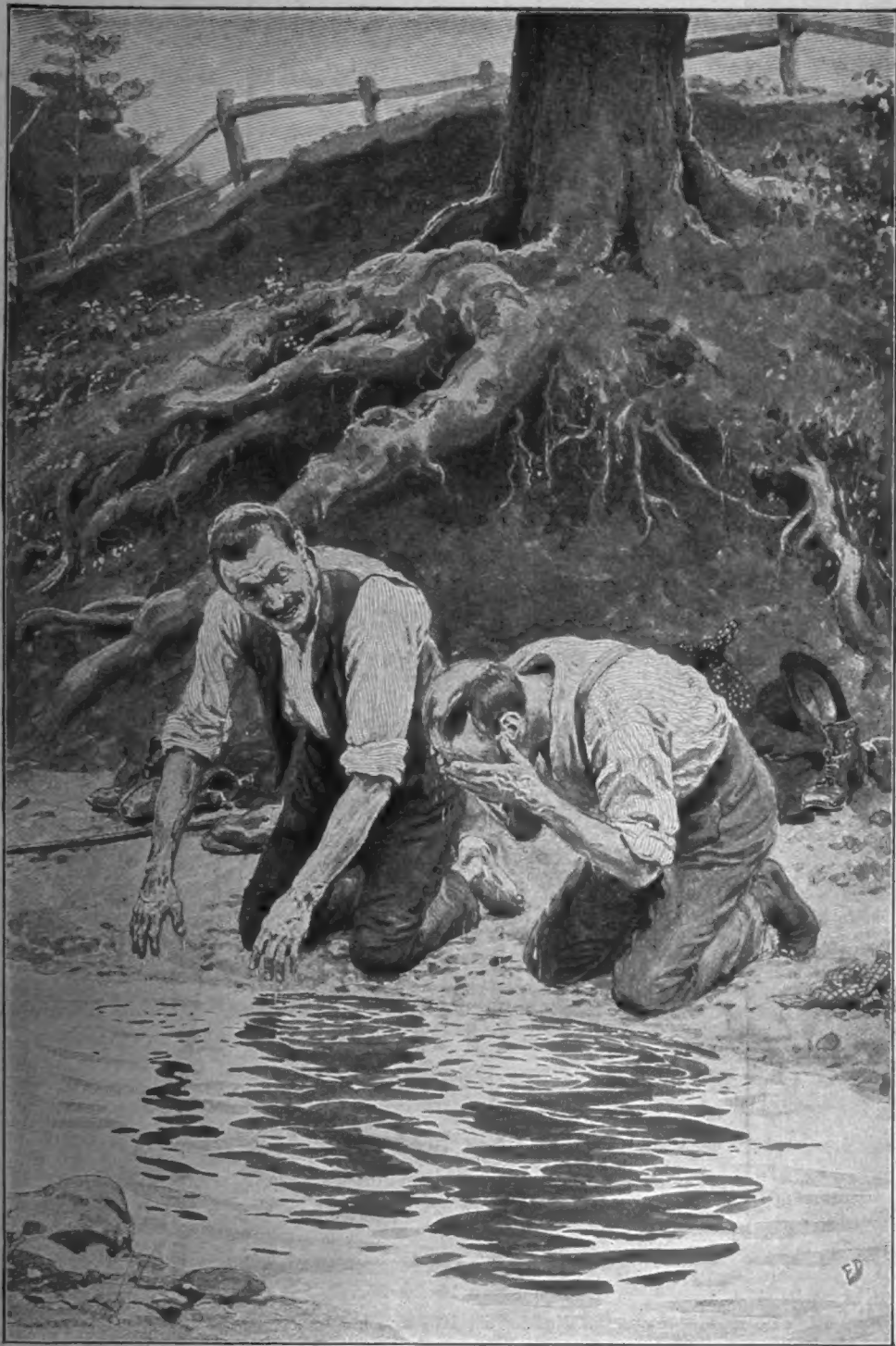
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THE SMART SET

A MAGAZINE OF CLEVERNESS

Vol. XXIII

SEPTEMBER, 1907

No. 1

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THE YELLOW STIGMA

By John Harwood Bacon

I

DICK WINTERS was drunk when it happened—very drunk, indeed. As a matter of fact, it never could have happened had he not been. But conditions being as they were, it did; and the consequences were far-reaching.

A red-haired Chinaman was a sight uncommon enough, even in Hongkong, where dwelt not a few Eurasians—the offspring of parents of conflicting hues. Uncanny creatures whose fair skins and European features were hard to reconcile with queue and Oriental garb were frequently encountered—in fact, had formed quite a colony of their own within the larger settlement—and their appearance on the streets aroused only the interest of the sight-seeing tourist. But a red-haired Eurasian was a phenomenon beyond the range of every-day experience, while to a mind a bit befogged by repeated applications of Scotch-and-soda the type seemed by all odds the strangest ever engendered.

Winters had spent the evening, now rapidly developing into early morning, on the steamer *Waldic*, which had arrived from San Francisco the day before. As frequently happened on a mailship's arrival, a prompt summons had been sent to the club for half-a-dozen genial spirits to dine on board with the officers, and—likewise as usual—Winters's name was among the number. Clever and entertaining and sufficiently well-to-do to indulge a fondness for hospitality, Dick was popular in the colony, as firmly liked by, the Englishmen of the island—

whose approval was not always an easy matter for a non-British resident to gain—as by his brother Americans, who at that time numbered barely a score. Friends and money he made with facility; as for admirers, the ethical code of the Far East made slender provision for their acquisition.

Comfortable in dinner-jackets, and hatless, after a day whose heat and humidity had combined to make all Hongkong swelter, the little party of diners-out gathered shortly after sundown at Blake Pier, and there boarded a launch for the *Waldic*, at her moorings a mile off shore. There was Evanston, the medico, an enthusiastic student of the cholera and golf; and Burlap, red-cheeked and jolly, the familiar type of well-fed Englishman; while Edwards, of the Cable Office, and Winters completed the jovial group.

Dick was sober then, but he knew full well what the evening had in store; too frequently of late he had carried out a similar programme to entertain any reasonable doubts. But the prospect did not worry him; in fact, he welcomed it. It had been the same story the night before, and the night before that, and for many nights preceding; while in all likelihood it would continue to be for many nights to come. For, as all the colony knew, Dick Winters had much to forget and was employing the world-old method of memory-obliviation.

Nearly four months before—just at the melancholy time when the rainy season was at its height, and the sides of the gaunt peak behind the city were streaked with yellow torrents—Mrs. Winters had gone away, and with her

September, 1907

(RECAP)

Original from
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Dick's tacit agreement to a legal separation. The fault had been his, his alone. Not a semblance of excuse could he find as again and again he asked himself the question; none, that is, save circumstance—a plea that he would have been the last to offer in extenuation. He realized that his punishment was just, and knew that Margaret had followed the only course open to a woman of pride and spirit. Her going was the inevitable penalty of his transgression, and he submitted, broken-hearted, but without protest.

To have lost her under blameless circumstances would have been bitter enough—how bitter only one who had known their three contented years could judge; but to have sacrificed her deliberately—virtually to have driven her away—and, more appalling still, at a time when by all the laws of decency and honor her claim upon his constancy was most sacred—the thought drove him frantic with grief and humiliation.

Margaret's departure had been marked by a quiet dignity in which tears and reproaches played no part. She was grief-stricken beyond the point at which emotions could ease or solace, and her attitude seemed almost feelingless and hard. To Winters, looking back upon those miserable days after the blow had fallen, the whole episode seemed a hideous hallucination, grotesque, impossible. So suddenly had the wretched dénouement followed his brief period of folly that his numbed faculties seemed utterly unable to comprehend the truth. That it was all too true, however, events which quickly followed proved.

Calmly, but with no sign of relenting, Margaret announced her decision to return to her parents in Chicago, and with deep humility he had arranged for her homeward journey, leaving nothing undone to make it as comfortable as her condition would permit. He would gladly have deeded her his property—turned over his entire fortune unconditionally—anything, everything, if only she had permitted him to show his deep contrition. But to his deeper

humiliation she declined to touch even the portion that was hers by right: her one desire seemed to be to escape; to go where she might never see him again.

No message from her had come since that miserable day when he had stood on the pier, gray and haggard, looking nearer fifty than thirty-three, and had watched the steamer glide relentlessly out of the harbor. Nor had he expected to hear from her. He knew that he had forfeited all that love and esteem and wifely pride had meant to him, and with it even the privilege of receiving a few words in the handwriting which a few years before had made each mailship's arrival the all-important event of the week—the writing which once had brought a certain precious "yes." He realized that the separation was absolute, and bowed to its conditions.

But after weeks of suspense there came in a despatch from his Chicago lawyer tidings whose very possibility had made his transgression triply despicable—a three-word cablegram, simply, "Girl. Both well." And while it dispelled the haunting fears which had kept him in a state of ceaseless dread, it brought to the grief-stricken husband a realization that the wrong he had done now affected another; that a baby girl had come to bear a portion of his shame—one who never would know him as father, one whom he never could know as daughter. Small wonder Dick Winters sought to forget.

The evening on the *Waldic* was precisely as anticipated. An excellent dinner formed an agreeable preliminary to the real work of the evening—a "little game" with moderate stakes and an inexhaustible supply of bottles. In the cards, however, Dick took no share; his interests lay solely in the direction of a long tumbler which the Japanese boys never permitted to be empty. Apart from the others he sat in dogged meditation, and mechanically applied himself to the task which had prompted his acceptance of the invitation. By midnight his object was in a fair way to be accomplished.

In the meantime the game con-

tinued with no interruption beyond an occasional comment from one or the other of the players, and the frequent gurgle of a tansan bottle. At midnight the session ended, and with a good-night "Dock and Dorris" the guests rose to take their departure. But not Dick. Courteously and mellowly he explained that for him at that particular hour home was an institution not to be considered; work of importance would require his remaining at least an hour longer. Blithely he extended his adieux when the others, seeing the uselessness of urging, were compelled to depart without him, and gravely he turned to his replenished tumbler, with the good-natured captain to keep him company. Three bells sounded before he finally decided that, after all, it might be well to conclude his visit, and fifteen minutes later he was moving unsteadily down the gangway to a sampan which a quartermaster summoned with some difficulty from its anchorage, some distance astern.

The small craft alongside was like thousands of others in Hongkong harbor, a fragile-looking affair which served as sole support and permanent abode for a numerous Chinese family. A stuffy little cabin was hastily cleared of assorted children, while the passenger balanced uneasily on the gangway step; and then with a lurch the boat shot forward, as Dick stepped aboard and tumbled unceremoniously into the space prepared for his reception.

A sleepy Chinaman, the head of the floating household, tugged sullenly away at the ropes, while his angular son lent drowsy assistance at his side. A wrinkled old woman made her way spryly to the sweep at the stern, and with the skill which years of practice had given her brown, shriveled arms, swung the boat away from the steamer's side. The mother of the infant brood, dark-eyed and rather pretty, though woefully untidy, took her place at one of the oars behind a boy and girl of nine or ten, who jointly managed the other. Two smaller youngsters were asleep on the narrow deck,

where they had been unceremoniously deposited, while another equally diminutive tot toddled resolutely to a secluded spot in the bow. A black-tongued chow dog, which snapped spitefully at the newcomer and growled, and several chickens complaining irritably in a bamboo crate completed the family group.

To Dick, sampans and their miscellaneous cargoes were far too familiar to occasion interest even of a milder sort; at that particular moment sleep was a matter of far deeper concern. He paused only to explain in expressive pidgin-English to the man that he "wantchee go Blake Pier-side," then promptly settled back for a period of sweet repose. With a sigh of content, forerunner of the comfort shortly to be his, he turned up his collar and stretched out his legs as far as the narrow limits of the cubby-hole would permit, and with a smile of satisfaction prepared for slumber. But just as his eyelids were closing something interfered with his worthy intention. A shadowy object stirring on the opposite seat chanced to catch his notice, and the desire to sleep gave way for the moment to a spirit of investigation. With more than a languid interest he peered through the semi-darkness, and a second time distinctly discerned something moving. His spirit of investigation grew more pronounced, and he struck a match, the light flickering uncertainly for a moment in his none-too-steady fingers before definitely deciding to continue. Then, as the flame became less feeble and Dick's eyes grew more accustomed to the glare, he saw to his amazement on the seat before him—a red-headed Chinese baby!

The woman at the oar, her face clearly outlined in the glimmer of a smoking lantern, noticed his expression and grinned. In blank astonishment—a frame of mind aggravated, perhaps, by the evening's entertainment—Dick gazed at his discovery, while the match burned perilously near his fingers. Still lost in wonder, he dropped the match to strike another, deter-

mined, apparently, to put the evidence of his eyes to a thorough test, and earnestly he resumed his study. A second scrutiny, however, seemed to convince him that what he saw was no hallucination. There in full view it lay, a red-headed Chinese baby—not exactly Chinese, either, the skin and features bearing out the testimony of the auburn hair that one of the child's progenitors was European.

"Hai yah!" exclaimed Dick exultantly, employing John Chinaman's favorite expression of surprise. "What thing?"

The Chinese woman's smile broadened, but she said nothing.

"What thing?" Winters repeated, pointing to the sleeping child.

"Belong my chilo," she answered simply.

"Hai yah," remarked Dick meditatively. For a moment he pondered seriously; then with a look of infinite wisdom faced the woman and solemnly delivered the result of his deliberations.

"Sho, mad'm," with dignity, "sho you've been ind'screeet." He paused to give his words due weight. "Yes, ind'screeet. You shay thish belong your chilo. Prob'ly—prob'ly it is. But, mad'm"—with a knowing shake of the head—"mad'm, you've certainly been ind'screeet."

The word seemed to catch Dick's fancy, and he laughed a silly, drunken laugh as he repeated it.

"I'm 'shamed of you, mad'm," he resumed. He shook his finger in mild disapproval. Then guiltily, he added, half to himself: "I've been ind'screeet, too."

Again he laughed, but this time the sound was hollow and mirthless—an unsuccessful effort to conceal the unpleasant emotion which his inadvertent reminder to self had occasioned. Even in drunkenness, which is oblivion's counterfeit, troubles have a way of making their existence felt; they flash back over a mind striving to forget, and tauntingly refuse to be ignored.

For an instant Dick Winters was sober. In that brief space he relived

four months of misery and heartache, while the pangs of remorse returned more poignant than ever.

But only for an instant. Dick was drunk, and the disconcerting visions were fleeting.

"Mad'm," he resumed, unabashed, "who'sh the father of your chilo? You can tell me," reassuringly, "in perfec' conf'dence."

The sampan woman continued grinning, though too evidently she failed to understand.

Winters grew impatient.

"I inshist upon knowing," he declared imperiously. "Tell me 't once."

His anger was plain, but its cause still remained a mystery.

"No sabe," was the helpless reply.

Dick laughed skeptically, still making effort to maintain a courteous demeanor.

"No sabe?" he exclaimed. "Mad'm, you 'muse me. You really do."

With a polite smile of doubt he considerably paused to permit an amendment to the preposterous assertion, but none being forthcoming, he gravely resumed his dissertation:

"Mad'm"—slowly—"that 'scuse don't go. It's been used too many times. Religions 've been founded on it. No, mad'm, no, indeed."

Wisely he shook his head to remind her that he was too old a bird to be deceived by any such assertion, while the woman resumed her work at the oar.

Suddenly a desire for another look at that remarkable infant diverted attention from the inviting problem of its undetermined parentage.

"Catchee that light," he commanded.

The woman dropped her oar and held the smoking lantern over the cubby-hole. As the yellow light flooded the cramped compartment, it fell full on the face of the strange little creature on the seat, and Dick leaned forward for a minute inspection. Baby stirred, and opened its eyes—eyes round and blue, not squinted and black—and looked up wonderingly.

"Are you a lady or gem-man?" de-

manded Dick, adjusting a smile intended to be reassuring. But baby declined to answer.

Impatiently Winters addressed the mother. "Belong man-baby?" he inquired.

"Belong man-baby," she assented with a nod.

A drunken impulse suddenly possessed him to pick up the man-baby. Awkwardly he gathered it up in its soiled attire, and with a labored effort transferred it to his lap, a loose, disordered little bundle. The mite gazed up perplexedly, quite unable to comprehend the reason for this midnight disturbance, but it made no sign of fear or displeasure.

"Number-one chilo," declared Dick approvingly. "How old he belong?" to the highly amused parent with the lantern.

"Nine moon," was her answer, while nine fingers were held up to make the meaning clear. Winters nodded comprehendingly, and surveyed his burden with increasing admiration.

"Number-one chilo," he reasserted. "Number-one chilo." At the imminent risk of dislocating a diminutive neck, he proceeded to trot the "number-one chilo" on his knee.

Then a wonderful thing happened—baby laughed. It was not a mere smile; it was an out-and-out, wide-awake croon, a happy little gurgle such as every baby on earth, be it American, Zulu or Eskimo, employs to express unqualified contentment. Drunk as he was, Dick understood.

"Number-one chilo," he declared again, pinching a pudgy little nose. "Mad'm, you've a fine chilo. And"—a fitting afterthought—"I like his hair. Most extraord'ry."

At this juncture another whim, born of a befuddled brain, seized him. He would like a red-headed baby himself. Why not buy it?

The idea was altogether too good to reject. Gleefully he turned to the woman, and demanded with business-like bluntness:

"How muchee?"

Again perplexity overspread her face,

and a shrug implied that he would have to make his meaning clearer. The question was repeated, and this time her countenance lighted with intelligent comprehension.

"Nine moon," she answered smilingly.

"No, no," with irritation; "I sabe how old it belong. How muchee can buy for? Wantchee buy."

As she slowly comprehended, she broke into a laugh, too evidently thinking her passenger much of a humorist, and with a grin she explained the jest to the man, who likewise bestirred himself sufficiently to smile.

Whereupon Dick grew angry.

"How muchee?" he repeated sharply, drawing a bill from his pocket. "Five dollar can do?"

The laughter ceased abruptly, and amusement gave way to open-mouthed amazement and a trace of suspicion. Both adults stopped their labors to indulge in breathless discussion, while the children also rested on their oars to listen.

Only a minute was required. Without a show of feeling the woman turned to Winters and nodded her acceptance, snatching the bill from his hand as if fearful that he might repent of his bargain.

"Can do," was all she said. Then with a word to the others she bent to the oar and pulled with might and main for the landing, but a few rods distant.

Five minutes later four chair-coolies on Blake Pier were surprised to see their master alight from a sampan, carrying what appeared in the uncertain light to be a bundle of tattered rags. Nor did their astonishment diminish as he approached, and the character of his burden was discovered. Their expressions pleased Dick mightily.

"Number-one chilo," he explained, with a chuckle, as he climbed into his sedan-chair and held up his purchase for inspection.

The coolies grinned and picked up their burden.

"Go home-side," were the drowsy instructions given them. Humming an uncertain version of a half-forgotten

lullaby, Dick leaned back in the cushioned seat and closed his eyes. Baby slept peacefully.

Through the deserted business district they traveled, past high stone buildings and low-roofed, green-bazaars, and thence on a smooth, winding road leading to the summit of the Peak. At a brisk, swinging gait the bearers strode along, while Dick sang blithely on.

Soon the houses grew more scattered and the road more winding, and at length the Winters residence, nestled in the gully overlooking the light-dotted harbor, came into view. Within fifteen minutes they arrived at the gate.

The front door was opened by a Chinaman too sleepy to display an interest in his master's unusual parcel, and without emotion he watched his master stagger into the hall, the child sleeping peacefully in his arms. Up the stairs Dick stumbled, and down the corridor, and without mishap reached his room, out of breath but happy. A moment of bewilderment followed—the liquor, the exercise and the indoor warmth were having their effect—and dazedly he laid the infant on the floor and sought to collect his thoughts. With a laugh he recalled his duties as host, and proceeded to cast about for a suitable guest-bed. An arm-chair would answer admirably.

Chuckling at the happy thought he dumped a package of laundry on the floor and moved the chair near his bed. But how about bedding? Baby must have something soft to lie on. To give the subject due thought he seated himself, and presto! another inspiration—his clothing would be just the thing. With a laugh he pulled off dinner-jacket and vest, and tossed them on the chair. Shirt and trousers followed; and then, dropping the slumbering child on the heap, he “tucked baby in” and punctiliously said good night.

A moment later Dick Winters was sleeping as deeply, if not as peacefully, as the queer little red-head near his bedside.

II

THE morning sun was making a persistent, but not altogether successful, effort to penetrate the bamboo shutters, when Mr. Richard Winters, aroused by a knock at his chamber door, stirred uneasily and brushed his hand across his overheated brow.

“All right, Ling,” he called drowsily—and straightway turned over for another wink.

His Chinese servant, thirty years of age, but compelled by the limitations of pidgin-English to be a “boy” to the day of his death, quietly opened the door and entered with his customary salutation, “Baffo leady,” which, being freely translated, implied that the jardinière-like tub in the alcove had been filled, and that soap and towels had been drawn within easy reach. With a similar greeting nine-tenths of the colonial residents were daily awakened.

Ling slipped quietly into the room, but instead of beginning his customary duties, he glanced covertly about until his eyes rested upon a diminutive object half-buried in a luxurious heap of evening-clothes. Evidently the chair-coolies had spread the tidings throughout the household.

“Hai yah,” remarked Ling under his breath.

With undisguised interest he surveyed the tiny stranger, but Winters stirred, and the study was discontinued. Deftly and neatly the boy laid out clothing and shaving paraphernalia, and then with another reminder that “Baffo belong leady,” noiselessly left the room.

The second summons had the desired effect. Winters yawned, stretched himself, opened first one eye and then the other, and gazed vacantly at the perforated ceiling with its idiotic border of tinted scrollwork. His head was throbbing and his mouth parched, and he felt altogether mean and unwholesome. The combined sense of weariness and depravity was not agreeable.

Gradually, events of the night before

began to assume definite shape in his semi-bewildered mind. He recalled the trip to the steamer, dinner, the card game, and—with a start he sat up and gazed apprehensively about him.

Even the corroborative evidence of his eyes was insufficient to convince him that what he saw was no hallucination. But if such it was, he was forced to admit that the little object in the chair possessed wonderfully lifelike qualities, particularly when it breathed a soft little sigh, opened two round eyes, and burst spontaneously into a gurgle of waking satisfaction.

A "Great Scott!" of blank amazement escaped Dick's lips, and baby turned in the direction of the sound to stare in open-mouthed wonder at the owner of the premises.

Limply, Winters sank back on his pillow, uncertain whether the situation called for laughter or profanity. He was conscious of a well-defined desire to indulge in both, but finding the exercises somewhat difficult to reconcile, wisely chose the pleasanter. So it had come to this, he mused. He could not spend a quiet evening with a few friends without entering into some such playful pastime as purchasing a baby. If such tendencies were encouraged he would require the services of a guardian.

In a philosophic frame of mind, he propped himself on his elbow the better to view his small guest, and quizzically he surveyed the arm-chair's occupant. Baby no longer was interested in the person on the bed, but now was giving undivided attention to a dejected flower protruding from the lapel of a wrinkled dinner-jacket. The crest-fallen boutonniere was clasped in a dirty little hand and crushed gleefully, while Dick looked on with amused admiration. Two small legs bared beyond the limits of strictest modesty were stretched out bow-shaped on the arm of the chair, and a collection of queer little toes wiggled industriously in unison with the busily occupied fingers. Baby's loose garment, its one possession in the raiment line, gave convincing evidence of honorable serv-

ice extending over several sampan generations, the hue, once gaudy, harmonizing well with the dubious shade of its owner. With apprehension not altogether unreasonable, Dick surveyed his evening-clothes and made appropriate comment, but again humor triumphed.

In broad daylight the infant's red hair was even more pronounced than in the glare of a kerosene lantern, and the effect of the freakish hue was highly ludicrous. In quantity, to be sure, the crop was limited, for the shears had been used in front and behind, leaving on top only an uneven patch, the size and shape of a badly chipped saucer. Careful scrutiny, however, revealed three incipient "pig-tails," each a two-inch wisp bound with a crimson string, these—following the approved method of queue propagation—to be braided in due season into one.

"Good morning," volunteered Dick, as his guest turned again toward the bed. "Did you rest well?"

Baby said nothing. Evidently it was too deeply absorbed in speculation as to its whereabouts to give thought to trivialities.

"Hello—what's that on your arm?" pursued Dick. "A tattoo?"

A star of pale blue within a circle was crudely outlined on the right forearm, the insignia standing out clearly, an indelible memento of a barbarous practice. With interest Winters bent down to examine the mark, while baby submitted with composed indifference.

"You queer little tike," Dick laughed, "I wonder what I'm going to do with you."

Baby had no suggestion to offer: weightier matters were demanding its attention.

"I don't wish to appear inhospitable," pursued Dick, with a whimsical smile, "but you can't stay here—can you? I suppose you'll have to go back to your misguided mama as soon as I can locate her. By George, it won't be an easy thing to do, either. But we'll find her somehow."

Baby, though all attention, still refrained from venturing an opinion.

In response to Dick's anxious look, however, it offered a smile which all too plainly expressed appreciation of the host's solicitude, but perfect content with its present surroundings.

"But you *can't* stay here," objected Winters nervously. "It wouldn't do. This is no place for a baby." A shadow passed over his careworn face, and with difficulty he thrust aside the thought that produced it. "You wouldn't be happy here. Why, you'd insist upon going back to your sampan home before a week was up."

As if actually comprehending the situation, baby pursed its lips determinedly.

"Now, look here," pleaded Dick in haste. "Don't be offended—*please*. You're going to stay for breakfast, anyway. We'll discuss the length of your stay later. And now," courteously, "if you'll be good enough to excuse me, I'll take my tub."

Punctuality was a trait upon which Winters prided himself, and however much his regular order of living had undergone a change, his practice of reaching the office promptly at nine o'clock remained inflexible. A glance at the clock showed that the hour was already past his scheduled rising time.

"Ling!" he called sharply.

With suspicious promptitude the door opened, and the Chinese boy, solemn and imperturbable, appeared on the threshold.

Dick seized his bath-robe. "You stay this-side while I catchee baffo," were his properly-pidgin directions. "Watch chilo."

Ling glanced indifferently at the arm-chair as if red-headed Chinese babies were quite the customary thing to find in his master's room before breakfast.

"All light," he assented cheerfully, and quietly set about straightening the room.

Dick's hot bath proved refreshing—he adhered to the Far-Eastern superstition that cold tubs make one "liverish"—and his headache gradually yielded to the water's soothing influence. Clean linen and a shave still

further assisted in summoning back a much-needed feeling of self-respect, and existence gradually began to assume a less discolored aspect. Half-dressed he returned to his chamber to find baby squatted on the floor solemnly striving to ascertain the make and number of a shoe which Ling obligingly had provided; while the Chinese boy was ruefully examining a wrinkled dinner-coat and a multi-creased pair of trousers.

"Hello, there," was the host's cheery greeting. "Now you have *your* bath, young man. Ling, you pay chilo baffo."

Nine Chinese boys out of ten would promptly have retorted that bathing chilos "no belonged their pidgin"—was not included in their list of duties—but Ling, happily, having risen from the coolie ranks, had no such exasperating scruples. With a good-natured grin, he picked up baby, while that young man, as if anticipating an ordeal, screwed a soiled little face into a protest, and began to wail tumultuously.

"Hai yah—that won't do," reproved Dick. "You take your bath, and then you can have breakfast. You couldn't eat with a face like that. For heaven's sake, stop . . . Ling, when baffo finished, you catchee chow." The boy nodded, and for some unaccountable reason—perhaps the mention of "chow"—baby ceased its lamentation.

"And now," concluded Dick, with a hasty glance at his watch, "I'm due at the office. Make yourself at home, young man, and we'll talk matters over at noon. Good-bye." Downstairs he hastened, shaking his head dubiously.

Winters's quarter-hour at the breakfast-table was devoted mainly to troubled speculation as to what should be done with the young gentleman howling lustily in the bath-room overhead, where Ling was following instructions to the letter. In a state of uncomfortable perplexity, Dick summoned his chair-coolies and started for the business district below.

The longer he pondered the more

puzzling the problem became. During the morning business received but scant attention, for with each review the situation assumed aspects more and more disquieting. To find the youngster's mother, he realized, would be well-nigh out of the question; there were thousands of sampans in Hong-kong harbor, and each bore a disheartening resemblance to every other. Even if, by chance, he should run across the right one, positive identification would be far from easy, particularly as the woman's probable denial would be ably seconded by her husband—who had fairly substantial reasons to view a red-haired son in the light of an intruder. No, a search for the sampan would be worse than useless.

He might, to be sure, turn the child over to the colonial police, and let them shoulder the responsibility; but the chances were they would not welcome the task, while in any event the course would involve embarrassing explanations. The longer he pondered the more convinced he became that his position was not wholly enviable.

One thing was certain—a home must be found, and at once, to take the place of the sampan residence for whose loss he was to blame. Perhaps he could find a Chinese family to adopt the baby for a suitable consideration. All things considered, this plan seemed the most feasible, and he practically decided to follow it.

But why not keep chilo himself? The suggestion came suddenly from somewhere in inner consciousness, and caused him a very decided start, if not positive alarm.

"Absurd!" he muttered. "Ridiculous!"

But even while figuring upon ways and means of procuring a suitable set of foster-parents for his diminutive white elephant, he found the question bobbing up again and again, causing untold annoyance.

"Why not?" the same voice demanded persuasively. "The youngster wouldn't be particularly in the way, and it might be rather a diverting

adjunct to the household. Why not?" To the exclusion of other matters, the problem continued to receive troubled attention.

While a frown of pathetic anxiety was adorning Winters's countenance, a Eurasian infant ensconced in the Winters Peak bungalow was exhibiting a smile most beautiful to see. The indignity of an enforced bath had been more than counterbalanced by a bowl of delicious rice and milk, the latter an unheard-of luxury; and with hunger appeased, life seemed less of a burden. The crowning feature of the morning was a triumphal tour of the coolie quarters, where the house servants, from the sleek old cook to the hard-working "learn-pidgin" boy, passed official approval amid much unmusical talk and laughter.

When Winters returned for tiffin at noon his guest was seated on the veranda, a picture of oriental splendor in a scarlet gown which the resourceful Ling had unearthed. Industrious striving to jab out the eyes of Tommy, the big Siamese cat, baby's attention was given solely to the task in hand, while Ling viewed proceedings with unfeigned satisfaction.

"Belong good chilo," was the Chinese boy's grinning announcement. "No makee cly; just makee laugh all morning."

"I'm glad to hear such good reports, sir," approved Dick, bending down to pat a small cheek which, in all probability, never before had displayed such excessive cleanness. "But look out there; Tommy's claws are not manicured!"

The little fellow's Eurasian characteristics were more in evidence than ever, now that the neutralizing effects of dirt were missing: The skin was fair, and the eyes dark blue, while the general contour of the face was in most essentials un-Mongolian.

Without delay, though not without misgiving, Winters announced the result of his morning's deliberations; baby was to stay! With a sense of exhilarating adventure he had decided to abide by his bargain.

"Ling," said he, with a dubious smile, "chilo is going to live this-side. Suppose can do?"

The plan met Ling's instant approval. "Can do!" was his smiling assurance.

"And now, young man," remarked Dick to his visitor, who at that particular moment seemed more interested in Tommy's eyes than in the momentous decision just rendered, "you'll need a nurse, won't you? . . . Can you catch an amah, Ling?"

Ling could; he knew several amahs who were "number-one," and he would "catch" one that afternoon. His alacrity suggested a suspicion that the care of chilo might otherwise devolve upon himself.

Several times that afternoon Dick glanced up from his work to smile at the thought of his newly-assumed responsibility. Even if he had acted somewhat hastily, he argued, there was now something to occupy his mind, and that alone was excuse for the experiment. Yes, he was distinctly glad he had done it. And yet—a dubious shake of the head alternated with his smile of satisfaction.

At half-past four, following his custom, Winters dropped work and strolled over to the club, whose commodious building was but a short distance from the office. Five minutes later he was comfortably established in a corner of the veranda overlooking the busy harbor, his feet against the stone pillar and a glass of Scotch-and-soda tucked securely in the rattan chair-arm. Dreamily he leaned back and watched the restless scene below, a view which never lost its fascination. Dozens of launches darted in and out among freighters and liners and warships of every flag, while high-sterned junks and overcrowded sampans seemed literally to fill all spaces intervening. Restless laziness was the impression wrought by the ever-moving panorama.

"Ah, hello there, Dick!"

A familiar voice roused him from his reverie, and he turned to greet a tall officer of the Royal Engineers, emerging from the bar.

"Just the one I'm looking for,"

declared the new-comer. "Rather thought I'd find you drinking in the scenery."

"Suppose we have something more substantial!" laughed Winters, clinking his glass. "Join me, won't you? . . . Boy!" to a white-jacketed waiter. "What will it be, old man?"

"The same, thanks. I can stop only a minute—going to watch the cricket. Wondered if you'd care to come up to the mess tonight for a little game and a bite to eat?"

Dick hesitated. The engineers were famous hosts, and their entertainments well worth while. But for some inexplicable reason he felt an impulse to be "good" for one evening, and, somewhat to his own surprise, determined to follow it.

"I'm sorry, Wyman," he replied, "but I've a guest at the house, and rather think I'd better stay home and entertain him."

"Bring him along, by all means," urged Captain Wyman cordially.

Dick laughed, while his friend looked puzzled. "I'm afraid I'd better not undertake it," he answered. "The fact is, my friend arrived only this morning, and he's apt to be tired. Thank you just the same."

"You know best," was the disappointed reply. "We've planned a rather good time, and we'll miss you. . . . Well, here's luck, old chap." And two glasses of Scotch-and-soda received fitting attention.

When, fully an hour before his wont, Dick emerged from the club to start for home, several suppressed "hai yahs" escaped his chair-coolies squatted near the curb. So unfailingly, of late, had massa remained until dark that one of the bearers had ventured to pay a social call in the neighborhood, leaving but three for the homeward journey.

The sun was setting behind the Peak, and a breeze was springing up to temper the heat of the stifling day, as Winters's chair started up the road. For the first time in months the evening trip was not made gloomy by thoughts of an irreparable past.

Near the bungalow gate Ling was

standing, and with him a buxom Chinese woman whose faded blue garment hung loosely about the knees of baggy, square-legged trousers. Dick's coming was awaited with obvious trepidation.

"This belong amah," was Ling's punctilious introduction.

Dick viewed the applicant critically. "You can take care of chilo?" he demanded.

"Can do," she assured him.

"How muchee must pay?"

The woman hesitated, as if that phase of the question never had occurred to her. "Six-dollar one-moon," she finally suggested cautiously.

"Belong cheap," commented the naïve Ling.

"But suppose amah no belong number-one?" retorted Dick.

"She belong number-one—*mysabe!*" declared the boy, while amah nodded emphatic assurance.

"All right," agreed Dick. "Can do."

Well satisfied, he entered the house, while Ling and amah followed with alacrity.

"Chilo belong asleep," remarked the boy.

"Asleep?" mused Dick, with a smile for which he could offer no adequate explanation. "Ling, I think I'll have dinner at home tonight, for a change."

III

THE Winters scandal created little commotion in Hongkong. The colony was sufficiently "east of Suez" to boast the dual advantages which Mr. Kipling, in rhythmic verse, attributed to another Oriental port; while a mere domestic tangle was accepted as a matter of course—an entertaining break in the hot-weather tedium.

Such incidents were altogether too numerous to excite more than casual notice, and, as a rule, were forgotten as soon as their conversational values began to decline. Madame Gossip, to be sure, was by no means a stranger in Hongkong, and the methods pursued

by the industrious lady were identically those favored in other climes, running the familiar gamut from idle whispers to common talk. But after the inevitable dénouement, colonial sentiment seldom assumed a more violent form than mild gratitude toward all concerned for providing a new theme for conversation.

A certain indifference to moral niceties was not hard to account for at that period of the settlement's history. Few persons excepting those in official life—who of necessity conformed more strictly to convention's code—traveled eastward with any intention of making the Orient their permanent abode. The heads of shipping firms and banking houses looked eagerly forward to amassing a competence and returning to London or New York; while their subordinates, sent out as a rule under three- and five-year contracts, impatiently awaited transfer "home." Army and navy folk, of whom there were many, made even more limited stays, while scarcely one-fifth of the five thousand European residents considered themselves aught but transients. That for many the Purple Orient had its fascinations was illustrated time and again by the joyous return of a colonist who a few months previous had bidden his friends good-bye with the avowed intention of going back to "civilization" for good, but the population in the main was shifting and restless.

Winters's case represented one of the comparatively few exceptions to this rule of transiency. When scarcely out of college, and while casting about for a business opening, a chance opportunity to open a Hongkong branch for an American trading company had presented itself, and the offer was eagerly accepted. From the outset the enterprise prospered, and in time Winters was enabled to launch into business on his own account. Success attended this venture also, and the ultimate result was an establishment that yielded an excellent income. Under favorable conditions Hongkong fortunes, as well as habits, when once

fairly started, had a way of growing with surprising persistency.

Every Summer along with nearly every other resident of the colony who could afford the outing, he would journey to Japan, usually to Miyano-shita, where the mountain breezes provided an agreeable respite from overheated Hongkong. It was at this quaint resort with its birds and its flowers and its picture-book inhabitants that he met Margaret Addison, who with her mother was tasting the joys of a first trip to the Orient; and here began the courtship which a year later culminated in an engagement of which all the world, so far as cognizant, approved. In due season Dick went to the United States and was married.

Mrs. Winters was warmly received in Hongkong, as indeed she had every reason to be. The arrival of any bride on a twelve-mile island where the women were outnumbered twenty to one was naturally a matter of more than ordinary interest; while in this particular case Mrs. Winters's charm, combined with her husband's popularity, made a cordial welcome doubly assured. Proudly Dick installed his young wife in the Peak bungalow that had been his since the dawning of his era of prosperity, and there the two proceeded to make the most of life, entertaining on a scale quite as hospitable, if not as lavish, as that which had marked the bachelor régime.

For three years their married life approached the ideal quite as closely as the average—which means, if one be not a cynic, that a great deal of happiness was theirs. They entered enthusiastically into the life of the colony, and soon were looked upon as important factors in a much-cliqued society. The months of mild Winter were made more than moderately lively by an endless succession of receptions and dances and official affairs of one sort or another with a virulent epidemic of dinners to fill in all spaces intervening; while an escape to Japan when the rainy season set in disposed of the most serious objection to a continued residence in the Orient.

But the Unlooked-For made its appearance—a manœuvre of which the Unlooked-For makes a specialty. Fatal Circumstance arrived one day in the person of a black-eyed widow—Amy Wood, an old school-friend of Mrs. Winters—who came from Manila to pay a long-deferred visit—and an event anticipated as a pleasure proved sadly disastrous. For weeks the hosts and their guest formed as jolly a trio as ever sought enjoyment, going everywhere, seeing everything, and making the most of the dozen and one ways that the island offered those in quest of entertainment. All went well for a while, and then, like a lightning flash from the bluest of skies, Fatal Circumstance—ably assisted by a pair of black eyes—wrought dire consequences. Mrs. Wood returned hastily to Manila, Mrs. Winters sailed broken-heartedly for home, and Dick remained behind to dilute the bitter dregs of remorse with an abundance of British alcohol.

People shrugged their shoulders, smiled covertly, expressed mild surprise, and—thought no more about it. For a few days tongues masculine and feminine found occasion for sprightly exercise, but before long the affair was consigned to oblivion to keep company with an inspiring list of others equally savory which at one time or another had contributed to the colony's gaiety. As for Winters, he continued weakly along the line of least resistance adopted soon after Margaret's departure. His utter forlornness, even if deserved, was pitiful; the very latitude and easy charity of his friends galled him, and he despised them as heartily as himself. Incidentally, he continued to drink far more liquor than ever was designed for one man's portion.

To his credit, however, other methods of oblivion-seeking were resolutely avoided. Dick was no libertine in any true sense of that unpleasant word, and his sorry experience had been as unpremeditated as retribution swift. Now that a single misstep had lost him all that he held worth while, he could see no reason why solace should be found in the misstep's repetition.

Deriving a shred of comfort from so doing, he determined to prove to his own satisfaction—if he could no longer to Hers—that there still was enough manhood to avoid that particular pitfall in the future. And he kept his resolve.

Following the promptings of his sense of propriety, he withdrew from the social life of the colony, and the Peak bungalow ceased to be the scene of frequent gaieties. His days he devoted assiduously to business, and his evenings to the club, where with clock-like regularity a jovial crew known to fame as The Thirst Seven assembled to smoke and gossip and keep the bar-boys in a state of chronic activity.

It was natural, therefore, that the news of Winters's red-haired Chinese baby should first be published at the club. Dick himself made formal announcement of his acquisition while taking tiffin with several friends, and though he skilfully avoided unnecessary details, the story in its entirety promptly traveled from one end of the island to the other. By everyone it was considered a capital joke, and Dick himself was inclined to classify it under that caption.

"So, you've bought a red-headed baby?" was the greeting received on every hand. "How are infants quoted today?" was one of the forms that the interrogatory assumed—amusing at first, but less so at its twelfth repetition.

At the veranda sessions the health of the "Winters baby" was drunk repeatedly, and each time, unknown to all, it caused a harrowing pang to the man who laughingly acknowledged the toast. Quite alone, and in silence, did he drink "health and happiness" to a fatherless little girl ten thousand miles away.

On occasions of this sort when baby became the theme of conversation Winters took pains to protest that they were wrong so far as his visitor's status was concerned. The small Eurasian was not an adopted son or anything of that sort; the present arrangement was merely a makeshift

until a more permanent home could be found.

"I'm not going to be its father, or any such rot as that," he declared impatiently. "Just going to buy it breakfast-food and soothing sirup, and watch it grow; that's all!"

But despite the repeated assurances with which he discouraged such suggestions in others, strangely persistent became the self-imposed query, why not? Baby was a bright and amusing little chap; why should adoption prove such an alarming responsibility?

A concession which might be deemed significant was his decision, one day, to give the small protégé a room in the house proper, away from the coolie quarters. Pursuant to this plan, Amah—who soon furnished convincing proof of her ability to "take care of chilo"—was assigned a small back bedroom, while a larger apartment adjoining was set aside for the exclusive use of chilo. By a gradual evolution the place took on aspects of a *bona-fide* nursery, while Amah, given *carte blanche* in the matter of infant wardrobe, collected an assortment of garments of wonderful hue and architecture.

As for baby, supreme contentment was its permanent and conspicuous exhibit. Signs of grief were few and far between; a funny little smile was well-nigh a fixture. When hungry—a possibility which Amah's solicitude rendered somewhat remote—its desires were made known without recourse to kick-and-squeal methods in vogue among infants of prouder lineage. When sleepy it quietly sought repose without violent insistence upon a musical obbligate. Dick had frequent occasion to assure himself—and others—that the youngster was a model of infant propriety.

With a praiseworthy sense of gratitude, baby began to reciprocate the favors showered upon it; almost from the outset it seemed to exert an influence for good upon its solicitous purchaser, and in more ways than one proved a remunerative investment. Winters found pleasure in the thought that someone, if only a diminutive

Eurasian, was still dependent upon him; mere sense of responsibility was a satisfaction. He found it good to focus his troubled mind on something besides his wretched self, and amusing to note the changes which a few days were making in his small visitor's pinched appearance.

The arrival of callers invariably was followed by a demand to see "the chilo," and straightway Ling would be sent in quest of Amah and her charge.

"What's its name?" was an inevitable query.

Winters didn't know; he hadn't yet decided. "Chilo" could scarcely serve indefinitely; but a better name seemed hard to find. He hardly liked to thrust a Chinese cognomen on a child whose Oriental characteristics were subordinated; but on the other hand if the youngster was to be brought up like other Eurasians a native name seemed more appropriate.

But why bring it up like other Eurasians? Would not the blood of a white father assert itself under favorable conditions? Why not give the boy a chance, educate him, help him to overcome the handicap of a worse than obscure parentage! Why not?

Such were Dick's self-directed arguments whenever the ultimate disposition of baby came up for consideration, and as the subject was one that occupied his mind with fair persistency, the problem received its due share of attention.

Let it not be thought that the course finally selected was the result of impulse; many an hour that otherwise would have been dedicated to slumber, and many a good cigar, were utilized before anything like a definite plan was chosen. But on his arrival home one evening some three months after the dinner on the *Waldic*, Winters summoned Amah to his presence, and made an announcement of startling significance.

"Amah," said he, with judicial deliberation, "no wantchee Chinese clothes for chilo. Can give away—or, if you wantchee, can have. Sabe?"

Amah appeared bewildered. "My can have?" she inquired.

"Yes, you. Take 'em for a kumsha. Tomorrow you catch Melican clothes for chilo—sabe? Wantchee pretty ones—number-one. Wantchee make chilo a Melican chilo; no wantchee Chinese chilo! Sabe?"

Amah gradually comprehended. "My sa-be," she assented. "Can do."

With the utmost difficulty she suppressed her excitement while hastening to the coolie quarters to spread the tidings.

It was the following afternoon that Winters, nearing home, came suddenly upon Amah out for a constitutional, while behind—clad in a white, be-ribboned frock, diminutive socks of blue, and tiny "Melican" shoes—toddled a round-faced little somebody whose hair, resisting an obvious effort to brush it down, bore a resemblance to a magenta chrysanthemum.

"Hai yah!" exclaimed Dick delightedly. "What thing?"

"Belong Melican chilo," explained Amah proudly.

"So I see! Fine!"

Then as he patted a plump little cheek—for the time being as clean as the brand-new muslin frock—he remarked with befitting gravity:

"Now, sir, you're a member of the family! . . . Let me see, I haven't any relatives named Henry . . . Mr. Harry Winters, let's go in to dinner!"

IV

At the millennium, when rewards are distributed in strict accordance with deserts, a crown of fine gold—or, more probably, of jade and South Sea pearls—will be handed, with appropriate remarks, to the Chinese amah.

Of all faithful souls whose lives are devoted to the care of other people's children, the nurse of far-off China Land deserves special consideration. Of her own tender offspring, to be sure, she is apt to be a trifle neglectful, but in lavishing attention upon the children of her employer she displays an unselfishness seldom equaled.

One cool Fall morning, when the breezes were blowing their balmiest, and the foliage on the mountain-side was exhibiting a variety of colors, a group of Hongkong nurses in the public gardens was augmented by a swarthy matron of generous build and expansive smile—one officially known thereafter as "Massa Winters's amah." Toddling behind her, steadfastly refusing to be carried, was Massa Winters's chilo.

It was evident that Amah—she had no other name in the Winters household—was well pleased to have baby transformed into a "Melican chilo." Conscientious though she had been in the performance of her duties, she could not but deem the assumption of a Eurasian charge a matter of professional necessity rather than a mission of love. Mixed blood was not to her liking—for by Chinese of every class the half-caste is held in contempt—but mere change of attire was quite sufficient to conquer prejudice; from that moment chilo "belonged American."

In the gardens, Amah sought the amahs of European families thenceforth, religiously keeping her charge away from the contamination of native chilos. Day and night was she at Harry's side, and with all the tenderness of a mother nursed him through the croup and similar unavoids, while almost hourly, when his proficiency as a toddler reached its height, did she have occasion to rescue him from situations threatening fractured arms or dislocated necks. Often she scolded in tones calculated to inspire great fear and awe, and once in a great while, when milder methods failed, she administered punishment of a more specific and less argumentative character. As a rule, however, she permitted herself to be bulldozed shamefully whenever the young man took it into his red-fringed head to exercise masculine judgment.

Whether or not Harry was a well-behaved baby—and Amah would have resented a hint to the contrary—there is no denying that he was an accom-

plished one. At an age when most small boys meet with indifferent success in their efforts to be understood Harry was a linguist of ability, capable of expressing his views not only in Chinese, but in beautiful "pidgin." His foster-father, endowed by nature with dignity, reserve and a sense of modesty, boasted outrageously whenever his protégé became the theme of conversation.

Quickly, uneventfully, several years passed, bringing uniform happiness to a little fellow of dubious ancestry, and satisfaction—qualified but genuine so far as it went—to his self-imposed guardian. Contentment Winters did not expect. He knew that while the bruise of mere misfortune might be soothed by time and even forgotten, the wound caused by knowledge of an irreparable wrong done another could never wholly heal.

Adoption of normal habits of living, however, was ultimately bound to come.

Winters was too much of a man long to seek solace where the first pangs of remorse had driven him, and too sensible not to recognize the futility of such mock consolation. Occasionally, it is true, impulse would override judgment, but always with the same result: he found that troubles, despite their heaviness, would float. Less and less frequent grew these lapses, until finally they were discontinued.

While not directly responsible for the change, Harry's admission to the household furnished an occasion to settle once more into the easy-going, decent existence that normally appealed, and marked Winters's first real effort to rise from the slough of despond. The luxury of possessing a protégé served as a comfort that grew more pronounced as time went on, and helped to keep off utter loneliness. But comforting though the responsibility was, Dick could not but realize its hopeless inadequacy as a substitute for the natural bonds he had broken. On more than one night, after a solitary dinner, he would shut himself in the little "den" where

he and Margaret had passed so many cozy evenings, and there, with only an impersonal and half-doubted Maker to witness, give way completely to grief.

With tormenting persistency Dick's troubled mind would dwell upon his fatherless little daughter in a far-away land—a land which he no longer looked upon as "home."

"Poor little girlie!" he would mutter. "Poor little sinned-against baby!"

There was no sacrifice that he would not gladly have made for the privilege of seeing his child, if only for a moment—to hold her in his arms and to feel, actually to know—that she was his. But the emptiness of such a wish was too apparent.

It was during one of the periods of depression frequently suffered that a possible solace suggested itself. Might he not, he wondered, send his daughter a gift—something that she might have from him, her father? Would Margaret understand, and sanction it? Would she, by any chance, distort the simple little expression into a veiled plea for reconciliation?—which he knew could never come. On reflection, he felt little apprehension on this score; Margaret knew him too well to misjudge him. Still he hesitated, and several days passed before he determined to carry out his plan.

A peculiar exhilaration was experienced in making the rounds of the Queen's Road jewelry shops and selecting, with much deliberation, a tiny pearl necklace of odd native workmanship. With excessive care he watched it packed, and in person bore it to the post-office.

But no sooner had the parcel gone than disquieting doubts returned; though at the same time he was conscious of a sense of genuine elation, the satisfaction of having given expression to the father-love that had craved for utterance.

Often during the next two months he wondered whether or not he had acted wisely, and then without warning his fears were set at rest: in the mail he found a postal—a registry receipt which he was about to toss aside—

when something about it caught his eye. He looked at it again, and a warm thrill swept over him. Scrawled on the bottom line—in a cramped little hand that evidently had been guided by another—was the signature, *Helen Winters*.

For a moment Dick stared at the writing, bewildered; then as its full significance dawned upon him, tears sprang to his eyes, and his feelings gained the mastery. Impulsively he pressed the crumpled card to his lips and clutched it as something of inestimable value, and again and again he gazed at the cramped little signature and murmured, "My own little girl!"

He tried to conjure up a picture of a sunny-haired baby, prim and important, pencil in hand, and back of her a tender-faced woman, smilingly guiding the chubby fingers. He knew that pity alone had prompted the kindly act—not for worlds would he have done Margaret the injustice to have thought otherwise—but his gratitude was none the less heartfelt and unqualified. It was good to feel not wholly abandoned.

Occasionally thereafter—as frequently as he felt at liberty to do so—he sent other gifts across the water; but though the same gentle method of acknowledgment invariably followed, he stanchly refrained from venturing beyond the point tacitly established.

At the advanced age of five Harry Winters was sent to kindergarten,* a private school at which two-score small Britishers were started on the path of strict conventionality. And what models of propriety these little English boys and girls were!

"I fancy we are rather late," a diminutive tot of seven might remark, en route to school.

"Really," another infant might reply, "I trust not."

Thus conversed these little Britishers, with their fair hair, their blue eyes and their sturdy legs bared above their stout British boots. Small wonder that Harry, when nine years old, had

developed into a polite little man, well-mannered to a degree that would make an average American youngster unqualifiedly weary. But in manner alone did he differ from his prototype in America; in the main he was a true boy, tireless and restless, with noise as essential to his soul's content as three meals a day and sundry raids on the pantry.

"You should meet Harry's friends," remarked Winters to a New York friend, who, tourist-like, had stopped over a steamer one day to glance at Hongkong before hurrying to Manila.

"Different from our home brand of youngsters?"

"Veritable little old men and women. They'd amuse you tremendously—they didn't exasperate you!"

The two were seated at the club, whither Winters with due regard to Hongkong tradition had borne his guest to perform certain rites prescribed by Hongkong hospitality. Two ice-choked glasses bore evidence to the prompt fulfilment of the function.

"The small girls," Dick went on to explain, "are so painfully proper that one is apt to feel uncomfortably nervous in their presence lest he make a *faux pas*."

"And the boys?"

"Slightly on the same order."

"What blessed comforts they must be about a household! Is your protégé of this diverting type?"

"Oh, Harry is pretty much of an American—even if his accent is a bit John Bullish. And some day"—stoutly—"I hope to see him wholly one."

"You're looking ahead as far as that, are you?"

"And further," with a musing smile. "He's about all I have," he added simply.

"Poor old fellow!" was the other's thought. "He's had a lonely time of it, and no mistake."

"And now," suggested Winters abruptly, "suppose we finish this solemn duty, and go top-side. . . . Here's how! . . . I want you to have a look at the bungalow—it's rather a

cozy roost—and also be formally introduced to my chilo. Dinner will be ready at 7.30, and we can smoke and be comfortable in the meantime."

The coolies were waiting with an extra chair, and soon the journey up the Peak was under way, the sunburnt bearers speeding along with less effort than a white pedestrian would expend on level ground.

Their home-coming had been anticipated by Ling, who had drawn a wicker table near the chairs on the veranda, and now was waiting on the steps to welcome them. A coolie was stationed to pull the *punkah*, and the two wayfarers seated themselves in its cooling breeze while the "number-one boy" proceeded to "catchee whisky-soda, chop-chop."

"And this," sighed the visitor contentedly, "is true barbaric luxury. It's worse: it's criminal ease!" Approvingly he viewed preparations for his still further comfort. "Hongkong has my official sanction," he declared.

"Perhaps you would qualify your judgment if you were here during the rainy season," ventured Dick. "But to my mind, this is the only place on earth for a white man."

A few moments later Harry appeared, his stout little legs supporting a body as straight and supple as a bamboo shoot. He paused as he noticed a visitor on the veranda, and punctiliously rolled down his sleeves, and donned his jacket, which he had been carrying. Then with due solemnity he was presented. It was evident, however, that dignity was maintained with difficulty: he had news of importance to impart, and delay was trying.

"Father," he burst out excitedly, unable to contain himself any longer, "I whipped Reggie Thomas today, and whipped him badly!"

"Reggie Thomas! Why—why, he's twice your size! What do you mean?" Disapproving though Winters's tone unquestionably was, it contained a wee note of pride that amused the visitor immensely.

"Yes," Harry went on jubilantly, "he called me 'red-head,' an' Willie

Johnson held him, an' I punched his nose, an'——"

"Oh, that's how you did it!" exclaimed Winters, chagrined. "Well, if I were you, I'd keep away from Reggie Thomas for a day or two—unless Willie Johnson happens to be around! And I think I'd find a less strenuous sport than punching noses."

"But he called me 'red-head,'" repeated Harry. Crestfallen, he went into the house, leaving the others to enjoy their laugh.

"A bright little chap!" commented the visitor.

"Bright! He has more ideas than most youngsters three times his age. He was only four years old when he insisted upon knowing one day where the hole went when we closed the window! I've been puzzling to find an answer ever since."

A polite smile was all that was needed to call forth further proofs of precocity.

"On my way home the other day I met Harry and two of his friends, and in an outburst of generosity gave them ten cents apiece to invest in sweets at the little Portuguese store. When Harry came home he had a Chinese jumping-jack which, he announced, he had bought instead of gumdrops.

"But where did you get the candy you're eating?" I demanded, noticing that his cheeks were suspiciously puffed.

"Oh," he explained coolly, "I rented my jumping-jack to the other boys."

"An embryonic financier!" laughed the visitor. "What do you propose to make of him?"

"There's only one point definitely decided: he's to be an American."

"So you said. H'm! But look here, wouldn't there be obstacles in the way of his living in America?"

"How so?"

"Well—let me see. How about the Exclusion Laws?"

"Harry is of the exempt class."

"But—think of other difficulties. His position socially, for example."

A shade of anxiety passed over Winters's face. "Do you really think,"

he asked earnestly, "that his Oriental characteristics are at all noticeable?"

"I suppose," was the cautious reply, "if I hadn't known beforehand that he was a Chinaman——"

"A Eurasian," corrected Winters. "But pardon me, you were saying——"

"If I hadn't been told I don't suppose I should have thought him different from any other boy. But knowing, I rather fancied I detected traces of his—er—Chinese ancestry."

"Personally, I can't—for the life of me," declared Dick. "But then, I'm prejudiced, I admit."

"But about his chances in America," pursued the other. "Are you going to send him to college?"

"To Princeton. First to a preparatory school."

"But suppose"—argumentatively—"suppose you succeed in making a—well, an approximate American of him. Won't he have rather a hard row to hoe?"

"I don't see why."

"When one considers the prejudice against negroes, or even mulattoes, no matter how well educated, the chances would seem somewhat against him."

"But Harry isn't a negro," warmly, "nor a Chinaman. He's as much a Caucasian as he is Mongolian—and a precious sight more. Why, in every essential he's unlike an Oriental, and if education and environment can make him more so, he's going to have the best of both."

"I can't say I envy his future," was the blunt rejoinder.

Dick looked troubled, but as Harry reappeared in the doorway, the discussion ended.

V

THE boyhood of Harry Winters was essentially like that of any youngster blessed with a healthy appetite and a comfortable home. In Summer he went on famous swimming expeditions—late-in-the-day launch trips to the mainland, with bamboo rafts for diving piers, and tea-and-toast—with

less innocuous refreshments for the elders—to lend zest to the homeward journey. On breezy days, if the spirit prompted, he would devote his energies to kite-flying. Marbles and “shinny” and similar games that know no latitude nor longitude were included in Harry’s category, but first and foremost in his affections came cricket.

With excellent facilities on every hand, it was natural that Harry’s fondness for out-of-door sports should be keen. Moreover, there was something about the picturesque island itself to stir a boy’s imagination and awaken his love of adventure. Frequently there would be brave tours of exploration, half-a-dozen sturdy youngsters plodding along one of the many Peak roads until they emerged, after mysterious turnings, at some quaint village, half hidden beyond the city’s limits. There they would move boldly among the staring, timid natives, and with much wise comment watch the transfer of silvery cargoes of fish from creaking junks to huge wicker baskets on the shore.

On other occasions, the boys on adventure bent would journey to the native district of the colony proper, descending to Queen’s Road and strolling through market and bazaar to the swarming section where the one-cent barber plied his profession on the curb, and the orange-peel vender hawked his wares. At night the band would reach home tired, but rich in the spoils of foreign invasion.

Each season had its event of special interest, but by general consent none could quite compare with Race Week. Late in the Fall the latter came, bringing with it an epidemic of excitement that in virulence quite outclassed those other grim annuals, the cholera and the plague. Weeks before, half Hongkong would rise at daybreak to foregather at Happy Valley, where a perfect little course lay nestled between the hills. In the gray dawn the Chinese ponies would be put through their paces by the pig-tailed trainers, while owners and enthusiasts took solemn note of each performance to the end that expert

judgment might later be vindicated in the betting-ring. Pools were formed at all the clubs—German, French, Portuguese and Chinese, as well as the staid institution of British allegiance—and for the time being the entire colony was racing-mad.

Office mail received but a perfunctory glance during Race Week. Each forenoon Winters would start for the course with Harry in a companion rickshaw, while all Hongkong with his wife or sweetheart was bound on a similar mission. On Queen’s Road and the Praya double rows of rickshaws whirled along, balanced by a returning current of empty vehicles on the opposite side, while between the alternating streams thronged pedestrians of every color and condition.

Along the homestretch extended a low brick reviewing-stand, divided into compartments for private parties, while a lengthy row of mat-sheds served the same purpose for the general multitude. Entrances to these temporary structures, bearing such decorative labels as “Sailors’ Rest” and “Chinese Club,” suggested that even here social distinctions were as clearly defined as in the more pretentious sections, where social lines were graded from the Governor’s booth, near the bandstand, to the furthestmost corner, where ladies of more vivacity than reputation received their friends and dispensed liquid hospitality.

In the various boxes refreshments formed quite as important a feature as the sport below, and Winters’s booth—shared since time immemorial with Brinton of the Pacific Mail—was always a popular rendezvous. First, half-a-dozen Navy men might drop in on their round of calls; next, the American consul and his pretty wife might arrive; and a moment later a group of visitors from Shanghai or Canton or Manila.

Meanwhile, Harry would be in his element. Not for him the gaily-decorated booth or the lively talk of his foster-father’s guests—except, perhaps, when appetite rendered a visit expedient. A place with the throng

near the judges' stand was more to his liking, where, card and pencil in hand, he could meet his youngster friends and gravely discuss the merits of the race-to-come or the outcome of those concluded. Each evening at dinner he and Winters would review the day's sport, while the latter would accept with keenest relish the pearls of wisdom dropping from the animated young mouth across the table.

"The best little pal God ever made!" became a favorite expression of Winters's. In the boy's companionship he found his greatest pleasure, and each year cemented the relation more firmly. And so, as time went on, the thought of separation which plans for school and college would soon demand grew harder and harder to bear. At times, even, he wavered, half-determining to abandon his long-cherished scheme and engage an English tutor instead; but in the end he invariably returned to his original determination. He knew that the problem confronting him was more comprehensive than merely securing a liberal education for his protégé; there was a handicap to overcome—one whose effects could be offset only by early contact with a world that would receive him on an equal footing. Winters was too well acquainted with Hongkong not to foresee the barriers that would soon be encountered. Already he had been forced to tell Harry the story of his peculiar origin—a playmate's mischievous tongue having led to tearful questioning that admitted of no deception—and a certain aloofness already apparent among several small boys gave warning of what might ultimately be expected.

"The sooner the real start is made the better," was Winters's conclusion; and he firmly put all selfish considerations aside. He dared not think how long a separation would be necessary, but vaguely trusted that events would so shape themselves that Harry ultimately might return to remain his lifelong companion and become his business successor.

Relentlessly the time approached

for the boy to go. On many an evening father and son discussed the plan, and now with enthusiasm, not untinged with regret, Harry was looking forward to his trip across the ocean and the wonders of the new life ahead. Definite arrangements for admission to a Princeton preparatory school were made, and plans concluded for the long journey which was to be taken in company with one of Winters's friends who chanced to be leaving on vacation. With a lump in his throat Winters booked passage "for one," and returned to the house on the Peak to report that the last important step had been taken.

"And now, my boy," he smiled soberly, "there's another matter we mustn't overlook. We must have a farewell dinner—say on Friday—the night before you sail. Go to bed now; we'll discuss it in the morning."

With an excited good night, Harry scampered to his room.

The next morning ten "chits," bidding as many stanch men and true to dine "in honor of Mr. Harry Winters," were left in the rack at the club, and by evening ten formal acceptances had replaced them. Not a feature of the arrangements did Winters overlook—he or Number-One or the Gardener-man or the Cook-boy or the others having special "pidgins" to perform—and imposing was the result when Friday night arrived. Twelve covers, surmounted by Japanese silver and a bank of posies, adorned the Canton tablecloth, and in every detail the affair reflected the spirit of the dinner-giving East—where good-byes were often said, but never without a shouted benediction.

For his guests Winters had selected his particular cronies—Brinton, partner of the racing season and mentor in times of stress; Walker, of the Standard Oil, a friend of many years; Wellington and Sayres, high in the service of the Civil Department; Dickson, of the Engineers, and Hartley, the American consul; while each of the others was conspicuous in the life of the colony.

Noiselessly the automatic Chinese boys served the courses, their operations directed by Number-One at the buffet, and merrily did the guests do justice to the delicacies whereof the cook-man alone possessed the formula. And when, at last, champagne had succeeded burgundy, which had succeeded hock—which, in turn, had followed sherry-and-bitters—Winters arose in his place at the head of the table and spoke as follows:

"I am losing tomorrow one who for fourteen years has been a friend and companion and son to me—all in one. Loving each of you as I do—and we've passed through many a cholera scare and rainy season together—there's not one that I could miss as I shall the little chap who sails away in the morning. Gentlemen"—with a choke that came in spite of all precautions—"I propose the health of Harry Winters—the best little pal God ever made!"

"Right-O! Right!" came in jubilant chorus, and eleven men sprang to their feet to quaff "chin-chin" and Godspeed to an embarrassed small boy, seated in the chair of honor. With cries of "His health" and "*Bon voyage!*" the toast was completed, and promptly Harry rose to respond.

"Gentlemen," he began, boldly enough—his boyish expression contrasting quaintly with the mature faces about him—"I—I"—his courage wavered, but a smile from Winters brought reassurance. "Gentlemen"—bravely—"I thank you," and he sat down in happy confusion.

Then up jumped old Brinton, one foot planted on the floor, the other on his chair, and in a voice more vigorous than musical began the fine old refrain that had seen many honorable years of Oriental service:

"For he's a jolly good fellow,
For he's a jolly good fellow,
For he's a jolly good fellow,
And so say all of us!"

With a will the others joined in the chorus, and thrice it was repeated, while a second boisterous toast was carried to a "nae heeltaps" conclusion. Proud was Winters, and proud and happy was

Harry. At midnight the guest of honor paid his adieux amid a chorus of good-nights, and retired to dream of the morrow.

And when that morrow had arrived, and a sorry attempt at a cheerful farewell had been concluded, a small boy lay in his state-room sobbing out the first feelings of actual loneliness that ever had been his; while about the same time a middle-aged man on the club veranda was observing tremulously to a friend:

"The best little pal God ever made!"

VI

THE tragic ending of her three years of married life made a far deeper impression on Margaret Winters than some of her unthinking friends professed to believe.

For months after her return from the Orient she remained of necessity in retirement, but ultimately she resumed the position that had been hers before her marriage. To her parents, with whom she made her home, the blow to her happiness was almost as great a shock as to the proud little wife herself, and it unquestionably hastened her mother's death, which occurred within a year.

Margaret was not, however, of the school that employs the heart for a sleeve decoration. Wounded and crushed though she was, she kept her sorrows to herself, concealing them even from her intimate friends. She preferred to appear the same woman—bright, cultured and charming—who had left, a bride, a few years before, and stoutly she avoided whatever might seem a bid for sympathy. Some few ascribed her attitude to lack of feeling. Those whose opinions mattered, understood.

Margaret was enough of the world to view the situation in its true light, neither lengthened nor foreshortened by grief. She understood human nature; she recognized human frailties. It was cruelly hard to learn that the husband whom she, wife-like, had

idealized, was not impervious to temptation, but she accepted the lesson without bitterness—giving all the credit possible to Amy Wood and to Circumstance. Even with hollow disgust supplanting love, there remained, after the first sting of grief, a sense of pity for the man who deserved little but blame.

She faced life cheerfully, not tearfully. No stranger visiting her father's home would have suspected that the woman presiding so gracefully over his board had passed through a tragic ordeal. Eventually she reentered society, and while her fondness for pleasure was tempered, as ever, by good taste and moderation, she succeeded in giving the impression that the past was forgotten.

The same sound sense marked her course with blue-eyed little Helen. No bitter element was supplied by hint of the father's anomalous position, every effort being made to nurture a love for the parent whom the little girl, in all likelihood, never would see. Helen grew up the proud possessor of a father as well as a mother—a father who, for some vague reason, lived many miles away, but who nevertheless thought often and very dearly of his little girl. Many a time did the gentle mother endure an embarrassing reference to "my papa," rather than disillusion the child.

Dick's necklace, sent from the Orient with such misgiving, served in a measure to determine Margaret's policy. Without hesitation she had given Helen the gift, gladly choosing a method of acknowledgment that she knew would give Dick happiness. She was proud in her conviction that he would not misunderstand, and it gave her comfort to put him to the test and find her confidence justified.

In one of the mysterious ways in which purely personal news travels around the globe, Margaret learned in time of Dick's adopted son, and was sincerely glad. No tinge of petty jealousy made her begrudge the comfort which she knew the self-assumed responsibility would bring, nor did any

lingering bitterness make her less happy in the thought that he had found a means of cheer.

"Dear old boy!" she smiled. "Dear old big-hearted Dick!"

Try as she would to prevent it, the picture of his altered life was constantly recurring before her mind.

It would have been strange, indeed, had not Helen Winters inherited rare traits of character as well as marked beauty of face. Even when a little girl she gave evidence of possessing her mother's fondness for music, her love of pretty things, and her gentle, captivating manner. She was a restless little body, paradoxically displaying an amusing demureness and an irrepressible love of fun; while along with her mischievous nature developed a taste for reading that her mother sought in every way to encourage. As a child she was taught at home, but after her fifteenth birthday she was sent to an Eastern boarding-school to prepare for Wellesley.

Thus it happened that Richard Winters's children—the daughter whom he had never seen, the son of his adoption—were simultaneously preparing for college, the one in New York, the other in a small Massachusetts town. About the time that Helen was entering upon her final year at the Misses Hedgewicks' sedate establishment, Harry—Americanized by two years at boarding-school—was ready to experience the joys and tribulations of Princeton.

True to a promise given Harry on his departure, Dick Winters journeyed to America on the eve of the boy's entry into college; but aside from a desire to see his protégé, the step was at best half-hearted. Slowly, but surely, and not wholly against his will, the years had weaned him from friends and associations of his younger days, and his thoughts centred more persistently in the place of his adoption. Here were his interests, and here the intimate friends of his maturer years. Even while admitting that the East lacked several desirable features—notably amusements and a hygienic supply of

fresh vegetables—he had a dim suspicion that Hongkong comforts would be sorely missed during his stay in more sedate surroundings.

With a feeling of entering a strange and unknown country he disembarked at San Francisco and noted the changes which a double decade had wrought, and with unerring instinct he sought the Bohemian Club to make himself comfortable for the day.

"I'm like an excursionist from Sag Corners," he confessed to an acquaintance. "It's all one's life is worth to board one of these confounded cable-cars."

"Too bad we haven't a rickshaw for you," laughed the Native Son.

"It would cross the city within ten minutes as quickly," declared Winters stoutly.

"Ten minutes, man! You *have* become an alien if you can talk that calmly of losing time!"

Somewhat regretfully Winters decided not to stop off in Chicago en route East, lest his presence should in some unlooked-for way cause Margaret embarrassment. A line in the papers or the chancemark of a mutual acquaintance might serve to recall sorrows which he earnestly hoped she had outlived. To see his little girl he would have made any sacrifice, but he felt that the privilege was one he had no right to expect. The year before, he had read in a Chicago paper that Margaret's father had died and subsequently learned that Helen was away at school while Margaret remained in Chicago. Beyond this, his information had been meager.

At the New York ferry Winters was met by a manly young fellow whose appearance furnished striking proof of the benefits of "prep." No father could have been more overjoyed than Dick as he stood wringing the other's hand and exchanging exultant greeting.

"Fine! Simply fine, my boy!" was all the excited foster-father could say, while Harry's words were even less intelligible. "Bless my soul, you're a man full grown!"

Tall and clear-eyed, Harry was a boy in whom there was every reason to take substantial pride. So far as his appearance went, he would readily have passed for a full-fledged American, not even the eyes—whose slight cast was always more or less perceptible—hinting at other than Occidental parentage. The reddish-brown hair afforded no clue, nor the slightly prominent cheekbones; while the straight nose, firm mouth and clear skin combined to produce a boyish beauty that bore no trace of Asiatic ancestry.

At school, so Winters had gathered, Harry's constant aim had been to conceal whatever outcroppings there might be of his Oriental lineage, and when his sensitiveness earned him an unwelcome nickname he promptly had discouraged its use by recourse to a fistic argument. By instinct, however, he was by no means quarrelsome, and his frankness and good humor soon won him deserved popularity.

Evidences of a mechanical bent early had developed, while his aptitude for mathematics was pronounced. His letters home had teemed with marvelous tales of what he sometime hoped to accomplish in the field of invention, and he was eager to specialize along technical lines instead of going to college. On this score, however, Winters was obdurate; he insisted upon a thorough classical course as a groundwork.

"And now, old man," suggested a beaming foster-father, after they had reached their hotel—a downtown hostelry where Winters had regularly stopped a quarter of a century before—"suppose you order breakfast, while I have a look at my mail."

Harry hastened into the café on his responsible mission, and Winters directed attention to a bundle of letters handed him by the clerk. Finding nothing of urgent importance, he put the packet in his pocket and started for the café—when a glance down the corridor caused him to stop with a start. Coming directly toward him, intent on buttoning her glove, was *Margaret*—older, perhaps, and a trifle

more matronly than when he last had seen her, but the same handsome, graceful woman who once—who still—was his wife!

Winters experienced an irresistible impulse to rush forward and greet her, and before he knew it he was at her side.

"Margaret!"

At the sound of his voice she looked up quickly, and an expression of startled embarrassment overspread her face. Involuntarily she murmured his name—then, frightened, withdrew her hand which he impulsively had taken, and started to pass.

In desperation, Dick blocked the way. "Please!" he begged piteously.

Margaret paused and looked at him reproachfully. "Is this fair?" she asked him quietly.

The words cut him to the quick, but still he persisted.

"No, Margaret, it—it isn't fair," he answered brokenly. "But if you knew, girl—if you only knew how I wanted you——"

She turned and hurried away.

Mortified and grief-stricken, he sank into a chair, a picture of misery. Unmindful of others hurrying to and fro in the lobby, he buried his face in his hands, able to think of nothing but his own unhappiness. But the next instant a voice—*her* voice—roused him from his reverie, and he looked up to find her at his side.

"Margaret!" he exclaimed, as he struggled to his feet. A hope to which he never before had dared to give expression flashed into his mind—and as quickly vanished. Pale but quite composed, Margaret spoke without a tremor.

"I didn't mean to be unkind, Dick," she said gently.

Again he half-sobbed her name, but she continued hurriedly:

"Dick, would you like to see Helen—our little girl?"

Dazedly he looked at her, and tears slowly trickled down his cheeks.

"Margaret—Margaret, girl!" was all he could find voice to say.

She looked at him compassionately.

"You may call on her, if you wish," she whispered.

"But it's you, girl!" he burst out hoarsely. "It's you I wish! Can't you see—don't you *know*——?"

She checked him with a gesture.

"Helen is at the Misses Hedgewicks'," she continued hurriedly. "Shall I tell her to expect you at three?"

Striving hard to master his feelings, Winters nodded, while Margaret added impulsively:

"I've told her nothing, Dick. She doesn't know." There was a proud smile on her lips, and her eyes shone brightly.

"God bless you, dear!" he stammered.

She turned again to go, but he made a last appeal.

"Is it really impossible? Is it, girl?"

"Don't you know it is?" she answered sorrowfully. "I'm leaving for Chicago at noon," firmly. "Good-bye, Dick."

Hastily she departed, and with her farewell ringing in his ears he experienced again the utter loneliness to which the years had failed to reconcile him.

"But Helen!" a voice within him whispered.

With a thrill he turned his thoughts to the wonderful privilege promised him. He was to meet his daughter—to talk with her—to *know* her! The right he had forfeited had been restored! Real hope was in his smile when Harry returned to announce that breakfast was on the table.

During the long forenoon Winters could think of nothing but the eventful episode of the morning, and with ill-concealed impatience he awaited three o'clock's arrival. After luncheon he packed off Harry and schoolmate to a theatre.

Left free to meditate, his mind teemed with unreasonable fancies. Would Helen receive him? Might she not refuse? Had not instinct already told her the wretched truths which Margaret's kindness had withheld?

But the rare gentleness of the

womanly mother was reflected in the daughter. Helen sought no excuse for her love's repression. With a kiss she greeted Winters, and with unfeigned joy she welcomed him.

For two hours he remained, happy and grateful. They met vague abstractions; they parted proud realities. In her he saw the counterpart of a pure, lovable woman he had wooed and won at Miyanoshita twenty-two years before. In him she found the materialization of a fancy cherished since early childhood—a *real* father.

Winters felt that a new trust was given him to replace the one he had forfeited, and earnestly, resolutely he vowed always to be worthy of it.

VII

A PACIFIC mail steamer leaving San Francisco a fortnight later had among its passengers "Mr. Richard Winters," by the grace of the local papers "a wealthy and prominent merchant prince of Hongkong."

Dick would have remained much longer in New York had he felt himself entitled to more than the briefest visit. And so, after seeing Harry safely launched on a college career, he returned to New York to spend a few quiet afternoons with Helen, and reluctantly left for the Coast. Before sailing he ventured to write Margaret to thank her for the privilege she had granted him; but of reconciliation his note contained no covert hint—naught but the gratitude that craved expression.

Little did Winters dream, when once more he sat on the club veranda and divided attention between the harbor view and the contents of an elongated tumbler, that he soon would be sailing back to America. With thoughts of leaving most remote, he was experiencing the seasoned Hongkongite's joy at returning. "Glad to see you, Winters," was good to hear; it was pleasant to be among the old crowd again.

"Live anywhere else? Never!" he declared to old Darby—who had been

in the colony as long as the moss-covered cathedral. "Why, I heard the East a-callin' every fifteen minutes!"

"If ever I get away and think I hear it," growled a young Standard Oil man near-by, "I'll listen damned hard to make sure it isn't some other noise!"

"My son," reproved Dick, "you're still too busy with the prickly-heat and the *dengue* to appreciate the beauties of this perfect life. Three years from now when you've had your first holiday, you'll pester your agent to send you back for the rest of your days."

"If I do, may I fall off the gangplank when I attempt to board the steamer!" prayed the "griffin" fervently.

Scarcely had Winters settled into the old routine and reassumed duties left for the time being in other hands, than sad news came to alter all plans for the future. A cablegram arrived one morning—a code-message whose first word, "Margaret," made his heart stop beating. Tremblingly—feeling that his gravest fears were to be verified—he reached for the code, and with blurred eyes read the second word's translation, "died after a brief illness today."

The letters swam before him, and a vague sense of hopelessness came with overwhelming weight. Listlessly he turned to decipher the final word. "Wait for letter" was its meaning.

The heavy code-book fell to the floor with a bang, and aroused him from his lethargy, and gradually poignant grief succeeded dull bewilderment. Haggard and broken, Winters staggered to the door and bade his coolies bear him home.

The suspense of the next few weeks but aggravated grief. The old remorse and shame returned to haunt him, and instinctively he felt that the broken ties of life were not to be mended. Impatiently, but with dire apprehension, he awaited the promised tidings.

But for once instinct was in error. With the letter telling of Mrs. Winters's death came a note from Margaret herself, written when she knew the end

was near. It contained nothing dramatic—no romantic assurance of forgiveness, no reference to the episode that had parted them. But it conveyed a message of simple confidence and entrusted a motherless girl to a father's care and protection. There were no specific requests, no conditions or even suggestions; but in the simple words of trust Dick read a duty admitting of but one interpretation: His place was in America with Helen! Without hesitancy he determined to sever his connection with the East.

"Close out everything that you can," were his instructions to Mr. Thomson, his solicitor. "I'm leaving forever."

Whatever surprise the grave legal gentleman might have felt was successfully concealed behind a mask of stolid British composure; but at the club—whither the tidings quickly traveled—no such reticence obtained. Regret and amazement were heard on every side.

"*Dick Winters!* The last traitor I should have imagined!" lamented old Darby. "What will you have to drink?"

In less than a week affairs were in shape to make departure possible, and on the seventh day farewell was bidden to the associations of a quarter of a century.

As the liner glided out through Lyeemoon Pass at the harbor entrance, Winters was surprised to find how little real regret he felt at leaving behind all that his years of effort had endeared to him. There was genuine elation at the thought of beginning life anew—even at the age of fifty-three! He was in his prime—there still was much to do! What greater privilege than living for the son of his adoption, the daughter of his own flesh-and-blood?

Never before had the journey seemed so interminable, nor was impatience lessened on reaching port when he learned that Helen had returned to school instead of remaining in Chicago, where he had expected to meet her. It was necessary for him to stop in the latter city a day to qualify as executor of Margaret's estate—which had been

left in its entirety to Helen—but at the earliest opportunity he hastened to New York.

The meeting of father and daughter was infinitely tender, and no words were needed to show how great was their mutual dependence. With deepest concern Winters noted the traces which bereavement had left on her pretty face, and straightway determined that a complete change of scene was imperative. Of the various plans that he considered, a joint-trip to Europe seemed best, and within a fortnight arrangements to that end were in progress. After a day in Princeton with Harry and a week in Chicago, Winters was ready for another voyage.

On the day of sailing Harry and Helen saw each other for the first time, and their meeting was mutually cordial. As a matter of fact, both had felt a trifle apprehensive—Harry because of his extremesensitiveness, Helen through qualms which her knowledge of his lineage had created—but doubts quickly vanished when they were brought face to face. At once they seemed on a basis of mutual understanding.

"Don't fail to write for sisterly advice," she admonished him, at the pier.

"I sha'n't," he promised gratefully. "And I'll do my best to need it."

Winters's parting injunction to his protégé was a reminder that great things were expected to develop from a patent coupler upon whose invention Harry had expended much time and labor and roseate hope.

"You're our sole representative of this side, remember! Our one hope for eternal fame rests on you. We expect the world to be revolutionized before our return."

Harry went uptown jubilantly happy—at last Winters had agreed to his entering a school of technology in the Fall, and the future was attractively rosy.

At Princeton the half-caste had been received on an equality with hundreds of other freshmen, most of them more callow, if less assuming, than himself.

At the end of the college year he had won a popularity that was based on something quite apart from his excellent athletic record. While through choice his acquaintance was limited to members of his own sex, he was universally liked and admired.

Winters's eight months abroad passed with astonishing swiftness for a person long inured to the luxury of Chinese servants. Continental hotels, to be sure, quite often aroused his ire, and other discomforts occasionally inspired mild profanity, but on the whole the trip was hugely enjoyed. Helen, rested in body and mind, was again the light-hearted, lovable girl he had met on that first memorable afternoon at the Misses Hedgewicks', and her buoyant spirits served to eradicate in most amusing fashion many small foibles that had unconsciously secured a hold on her father as a heritage of years in the East. Winters grew younger and less irritable. From the outset father and daughter were on a basis of camaraderie, the latter directing their various excursions with a gentle persuasiveness that Dick would not have combated for any reward that heaven or earth could provide.

"Simply couldn't get along without her!" he confided to a friend dining with them in Paris. "In these cafés I should have starved to death long ago if it hadn't been for her amazing knowledge of French."

"Father's trouble," laughed Helen, "is that he tries to talk pidgin-English, and then displays a shocking temper when the waiters look puzzled."

"It will be a relief," bemoaned the host, "to get where I can order a chop without a likelihood of getting ice cream or cheese instead."

He shook his head disconsolately, while Helen looked roguishly sympathetic.

"I've been dragged," he went on, "from the hotel to Notre Dame forty times at least. I've been forced to ride in 'busses that jolt worse than Maceo rickshaws—and worse still with hungry-looking tourists carrying sandwiches and Baedekers!"

"Daddy!" appealingly.

"As for the Louvre"—with a twinkle—"we've wandered through acres of remarkable exhibits that resemble either Fourth-of-July celebrations or questionable bathing-parties!"

"Such a hopeless father!" sighed Helen. "And after taking you to the opera!" Winters gave a grimace suggestive of pain. "But you've been pretty good today, and I'm going to reward you."

"Yes?" hopefully.

"We'll go to the opera again to-night."

A look of pathetic chagrin welcomed the tidings, but pressure on a small hand beneath the table told plainly enough that he would endure a dozen "Carmens"—and actually enjoy them—so long as they gave her pleasure. In being the victim of her pretty tyranny he would not have exchanged his lot for a new and up-to-date kingdom.

From Sicily to The Hague their journeys ran, and each day brought a recompense for the questionable joys of travel.

Letters from Harry, meanwhile, fairly effervesced; for the coupler—after vexatious delays—had actually been adopted by a thirty-mile railroad company. Jubilantly had the wondrous news been forwarded to the travelers, along with an announcement that college expenses would thereafter be defrayed out of the inventor's own pocket, and excitedly did Winters cable back "Hooray!"—together with an extravagant message of congratulation. No prouder could Dick have been had the boy perfected a commercial system of aerial navigation.

Again in New York, in apartments temporarily secured, Winters beamed paternally on his promising family. Harry had run up from school to welcome the travelers, and now was listening to Helen's rapturous account of their wanderings.

"But father was such a responsibility!" she sighed. "And so unappreciative! In all Europe the thing that impressed him most was a sign in a

French railroad train beseeching passengers not to throw bottles out of the windows for fear of hitting someone beside the track!"

Winters chuckled, without shame.

"And after all my efforts to make his trip instructive! I'm going upstairs and cry myself to sleep! . . . Good night, daddykins!" with a kiss. "Good night, Harry!"

"Good night," they echoed.

"My boy," avowed Winters a moment later, still smiling at the recollection of a merry little nod that had been sent them from the doorway, "God never made a more perfect little woman than that! . . . Except one," he mused. "Yes, one was as lovely as the other."

For several minutes he was lost in reverie.

"As for you"—suddenly—"go up to bed before I forget myself and tell you how proud I am of you!"

Harry laughingly complied.

For half-an-hour Winters sat looking dreamily into the open grate.

"I wonder," he pondered, "if any sinner ever felt happier than I—and deserved to less!"

VIII

DURING Helen's four years at college Winters remained in New York, living at his club and taking life comfortably as deep-seated habit demanded. Each year he went South, the tropics having so thinned his blood that Northern Winters became somewhat of a strain on amiability; but the balance of the time he spent near Helen and Harry. In time, the latter completed his studies, and went West.

Winters found that the care of Helen's estate and his own extensive interests easily provided sufficient employment to keep him off the retired list. As a matter of fact, he worked as assiduously as he ever had in Hong-kong. New York business activities, he found, bore about the same relation to those of the Orient as sawing wood to splitting kindling. All things

considered, however, he found the new order of things to his liking.

As Helen's graduation approached, the need of a permanent abiding-place became apparent, and ultimately—after countless suggestions from Wellesley—a comfortable place on the Hudson was secured, sufficiently near New York to enjoy the city's attractions, and far enough away to avoid its innumerable disadvantages. There, after the momentous events of Commencement Week, Helen was duly installed as mistress.

One morning, a few weeks later, Winters's perusal of his newspaper was interrupted by Helen—wiser by four collegiate years, and more radiant than ever.

"Harry is coming to spend a month!" she announced breathlessly.

She waved the letter that bore the news, while Winters tossed his paper aside to share her enthusiasm.

"Fine!" he declared. "Splendid! When?"

"Monday morning," delightedly, "the day after Ethel Edwards is due. Why, daddy, we'll have a regular house-party! Isn't it *scrumptious*?"

Winters agreed that it was—at least!

Harry's early fortunes in the West—where now he had been nearly two years—had been fraught with disaster, the failure of a bridge-building company with which he first had taken a position having suddenly left him in the uncomfortable predicament of being penniless and miles away from home. With pluck, however, he had sought a new opening, and, by chance, became interested in the subject of mining. The constant demand for economical smelting methods suggested a new field of effort, and now for a year he had been at work in a small experimental shop of his own in a struggling Colorado village bearing the sanguine name of Hopeful.

"If I can only get this magnetic-separator of mine into shape," he wrote Helen, "it may prove profitable."

"Bring one home with you," she answered promptly. "I must make a

critical examination before passing judgment. Do you realize, by the way, that several centuries have elapsed since you last paid your respects to father and me? Why not close your dusty shop and come for a holiday? Please do!"

Such pleasant reminders had been frequent, and at last had taken effect. Harry locked his shop and started East.

At a little red-roofed station he was met by Winters and Helen, and also by Ethel Edwards, a handsome girl who had been one of Helen's intimate friends at college.

"The prodigal son never had half such a welcome," he declared, as a supplementary medley of greetings began, after his presentation to Miss Edwards.

"We'll give you more than veal, my boy," promised Winters. "You may have every fatted animal the butcher-shop affords."

"Butcher-shop, indeed!" corrected Helen. "Harry, you'll have nothing that isn't raised on the Winters farm. We've the most aristocratic chickens in the neighborhood; and as for our garden, it's the envy of the little man who insolently calls 'Cucumbers and lettuce!' as he passes our door every morning."

Harry gave hasty assurance that one aristocratic chicken would be preferable to a drove of fatted calves, and climbed into the trap beside his foster-sister, who was driving.

"Behold our vast estate!" proclaimed Helen, with a majestic sweep of the whip. "The handsome edifice on the left is the residence of these dashing steeds. Adjoining is the chicken villa, already mentioned. In the distance you will notice three ladylike cows, who would be at the gate to welcome you, Harry, were they not keeping a tryst with James, the gentleman with the pail. As we approach, you obtain an unsurpassed view of the birthplace of the nutritious squash. And that humble cot," plaintively, as they turned up a hedge-bordered driveway, "is the only shelter the Winters family has in the world."

A servant was at the door of the humble cot to take charge of the luggage; and while Harry was being shown his room the young women hastened upstairs to remove their hats, give a few deft pats to their hair, and converse simultaneously. Thus began Helen:

"Well?"

"I think he's charming!"

"I'm so glad—I thought you would!"

"His hair is too pretty for words."

"Don't ever let him hear you say so! Did a pair of broad shoulders duly impress you?"

"Mm-hm." A hatpin was between Miss Edwards's lips, but it proved no barrier to conversation. "And eyes—what an odd little look they have!"

"Yes," hurriedly. "Shall we go downstairs, dear?"

Helen saw no necessity of going into Harry's peculiar ancestry. Her very fondness for him had made her more than once regret that he was not of some other descent; Malay or East Indian would somehow have seemed far less objectionable. It hurt her to feel that a prejudice, in a measure not unnatural, might in any way affect his status.

The young women returned to the veranda to find Winters and Harry waiting.

"Where's the magnetic-separator?" demanded Helen, as the two men rose.

"In the pocket of my other coat," was the unblushing answer.

"Where is what?" inquired Miss Edwards curiously.

"Something wonderful—with wheels and things," was the lucid explanation. "He'll show us after luncheon."

"And luncheon should be ready now," announced Winters. "Confound that new——"

"Daddy, daddy!" expostulated Helen. "I have the hardest time," she explained, with a look of pretty despair. "Father seems to think he's still in his Hongkong kiosk or bungalow, or whatever it was, where all he had to do was to clap his hands, and a twenty-course dinner would be brought in by faithful retainers. But, honey,"

planting a kiss on his forelock of gray, "Miss Bridget Donahue is no faithful retainer. She's the lady of the house, and we'll have luncheon when she is ready, not before."

"I wish we had Ling and Yee here!" sighed her father.

"Goodness knows I'd give them the best rooms in the house. . . . But here's Mary with glad tidings. Come on, hungry people!"

At the table the host's spirits revived in a manner to suggest that Occidental cares were not so burdensome, after all, and a smile of Barnumesque benignity overspread his countenance.

"Now this," he declared, "is a family worth having."

"I'm sorry you don't consider it 'worth having' exclusive of these two strangers," remarked an offended daughter.

"We are glad to redeem a hopeless situation," assured Miss Edwards.

"Now that's ugly—positively nasty! And from you—who had only a few dozen invitations for the Summer! I abominate ingratitude."

"I had none at all," confessed Harry. "Why was I asked?"

"Conundrums—and at the table! Colorado has made you provincial, dear."

Harry wilted to a state of humility, and luncheon merrily progressed.

"This salmon, I presume," ventured Ethel, "is a product of the Winters farm."

"From our own ice-box," proudly.

"There's really nothing like this agricultural life, is there?"

"Nothing!" agreed Harry. "These puffy little rolls are particularly fine specimens. Home-grown?"

"Mary," inquired Helen, "where were these biscuits 'raised'?"

"On the back porch, mum," was the embarrassed answer.

"Yes, home-grown," she assured Harry triumphantly.

No one more thoroughly enjoyed the luncheon than the host, to be with young people after years of clubhouse servitude was a keen delight.

"I'd like to make this a permanent

arrangement," he avowed recklessly. "I could stand a family of twice this size."

"If you mean it," spoke up Harry, "I should like to provide an additional member. I ran across Bob Freeman in New York today. May I ask him down?"

"By all means!" exclaimed Winters and Helen together. "Didn't I meet him at your commencement?" asked the latter.

"You must have. He's a delightful fellow."

"Splendid! We really need someone to fill out our party. I know the attention I'll receive from you and father while Ethel is here! Won't you write at once?"

"I'll wire."

"Good! I do hope," with a doleful look, "I'll make an impression. Father is so cut up over my failure to capture an eligible man! Cheer up, daddy; perhaps Mr. Freeman is the ray of hope we've been waiting for!"

"If you ever dare," threatened the irate parent, "if you ever *think* of daring to marry anyone, anywhere, under any conceivable circumstances, I'll—well, I'll do something violent. Do you hear?" He kissed her to make good the threat.

That same evening came a telegraphic acceptance from New York, and the next morning Freeman arrived.

Helen did make an impression, and also Miss Ethel Edwards, while Winters found the new-comer much to his liking. A merrier quintette than that established at Blenton-on-the-Hudson would have been hard to discover anywhere between Boston and Vladivostok—in either direction.

IX

"It's not too late to repent, daddy-kins. Won't you come?"

Helen, with a bottle of cream in one hand, a huge wooden spoon in the other, emerged from the house, followed by Harry, who was balancing a large and mysterious bowl. Ethel and

Bob, a basket between them, brought up the rear.

Winters smiled but shook his head. "No picnic for me, thank you, dear. When one gets old and decrepit one learns that damp grass and cold luncheons are apt to——"

"So you scorn our beautiful luncheon! Daddy, I'm hurt. We've the most wonderful chicken-pie imaginable—as you'll see shortly if Harry persists in holding the bowl at that angle! And it's to be served piping hot. You don't deserve to come if you turn up your nose at the sumptuous repast that Bridget—with some coercion—has prepared."

"I assure you, I intended no disrespect either to Bridget or the pie," Winters made haste to explain. "My thoughtless words will come back to me when I'm eating a frugal luncheon of lamb chops and French peas at the club. I'm going to town at ten."

"Well, be home early, dear," saucily. "Careful of the trolleys! Have you everything you need?"

"A clean handkerchief?" suggested Ethel.

"Your carpet-bag?" inquired Harry.

"Linen duster?" volunteered Bob.

"Money pinned in the coat pocket?" amended Helen.

"It's useless to expect respect," laughed Winters. "When I was your age—but there, what's the use! Start along before I lose my temper!"

He helped them stow away the picnic paraphernalia in the trap, and saw them safely seated; then to emphasize his displeasure, climbed up for a good-bye kiss.

"Try to behave as if I were with you," he begged.

"We sha'n't act nearly as badly as that," Helen assured him laughingly. "Good-bye, dear."

He smiled at the pretty picture as they drove away, the girls in fluffy white, the boys in comfortable outing flannels, and nodded approvingly as he noted an animated conversation between Harry and Ethel on the back seat.

"No need to worry on his account," was Winters's thought.

Chatter and laughter marked the course of the picnickers. Their destination was a grove, several miles distant, a spot prettily christened Murphy's Retreat, in honor of Patrick, the coachman, its discoverer. A rapturous description of its beauties was given en route.

"There is a dear little clump of woods," Helen explained, "and in the centre are the springs——"

"Are we nearly there?" asked Harry rudely. "I'm hungry!"

"When I'm feeding you delicious word-pictures of Murphy's Retreat? Shame!"

"And breakfast only two hours ago!" Ethel remarked.

"Forgive me," begged Harry meekly. "I didn't mean to be hungry."

"I'm starved!" declared Bob shamelessly.

"You're both disgusting."

"Please, ma'am, may we have a sandwich?"

"Decidedly not. Eating between meals is extremely reprehensible. But if you'll be good," consolingly, "I'll tell you more about Murphy's Retreat."

A duet of groans greeted the offer.

"Very well, no luncheon at all, then. We'll teach you simple politeness, if we have to resort to starvation. Shall I continue?"

"If you don't mind, I'll starve, please," grinned Harry.

"I'm not *very* hungry," said Bob weakly.

"For total depravity," gasped Helen, "you——" A look of outraged dignity completed the sentence.

"I'll tell you," suggested Harry, "we'll endure one Murphy's Retreat rhapsody if you'll give us a sandwich."

"We'll compromise," decided Helen. "I'll give you some fruit if you listen attentively."

"Agreed," they assented.

"Well," with deliberation, "as I was saying, there is a dear little clump of——"

"What is a clump?" demanded Bob.

"Something to eat, silly!" explained Harry.

"Look here," protested the hostess, "it's extremely difficult to converse in words of less than one syllable. Simply listen. What you don't understand can't harm you."

"Go on, please," they begged.

"There is a clump of trees with beautiful green leaves."

The boys looked yearningly at the basket.

"Attention, please—I'm telling you about the beautiful green leaves."

"Oh, I know, teacher!" put in Bob excitedly. "They——"

"Silence, or I'll describe *each* of the green leaves in turn!"

The hungry twain exchanged glances of alarm.

"But first let us come to the pretty, bubbling spring."

"Let's," grinned Harry. "The water's fine!"

Helen threw up her hands in disgust. "I'll not go on; the session's ended."

"Aren't we going to get our fruit?" in alarm.

"Yes," wearily. "Give me the basket."

The two smiled as she fumbled beneath the napkins.

"Are you really very hungry?"

"Starved," they assured her.

"Eat slowly, then!" Her hand emerged with two tiny olives, which she ceremoniously proffered them.

Crestfallen, they nibbled while the young women smiled exultantly.

Happily Murphy's Retreat was near at hand, and soon fuel was gathered and a fire blazing—conditions precedent to coffee and chicken-pie. When all was ready the result was what Freeman termed a "culinary poem and a personal triumph for Miss Bridget Donahue and employer."

Luncheon over, a canopy was stretched across the overhanging boughs, and beneath it the four proceeded to talk the afternoon away. The boys, full-length on the grass, smoked lazily and contentedly, while the girls, true to their sex instinct, bore the burden of the conversation.

"See the bluebells over there!" exclaimed Ethel during a lull.

In an instant Bob was attention, while Harry displayed but mild interest.

"Where?" inquired Freeman guilelessly.

"Up there!" with more excitement than a few innocent posies would be thought to warrant. "How I should like to get some!"

Hardly was the wish expressed when Bob was on his feet. "Suppose we climb together!" he suggested.

"Agreed! Come on!"

Meanwhile Helen was frowning indignantly at unconscious Harry, who, somewhat tardily, was making a half-hearted offer to assist. Services declined with thanks, he smiled with satisfaction, and watched the bluebell-hunters depart.

"I'm ashamed of you—disappointed as I can be!" declared a reproving foster-sister. "It's enough to make one weep!"

"What?" he said in surprise.

"To see you deliberately reject an opportunity intended for yourself."

"Foolishness!"

"I've eyes," severely.

"And wonderfully pretty ones!"

"Don't evade the issue! Why didn't you go with Ethel?"

"Because it wasn't I she wished. Moreover, I'm contented where I am."

"You've no right to be. When I form special plans I expect people to be appreciative and accept my arrangements without question."

"That's all very considerate; but please don't form plans just now. I'm hopelessly happy, Bob is happy, and Ethel is happy, and so——"

"It doesn't matter whether I am or not? Suppose I prefer Mr. Freeman's company?"

"I—I beg your pardon!" much discomfited. "I didn't really intend——"

His woebegone expression caused quick repentance.

"I didn't mean it, truly, Harry! As a matter of fact, I'd vastly prefer you. But I do wish you and Ethel to be friends, and it vexes me to see you deliberately ignore opportunities.

Please be more attentive! No—don't try to explain!"

He smiled complacently, and called attention to the wholly obvious fact that her frown was highly becoming, whereupon another just rebuke was administered.

"And now," she concluded, "let's be sensible. We've been acting like spoiled children."

"Very well. May I light a cigarette?"

"As a token of discretion and advanced years? Certainly, dear."

For an hour or more they chatted, and time passed unheeded.

"It's five o'clock!" exclaimed Helen suddenly. "Come, we must find the other children."

Reluctantly he rose, and in frank admiration watched her perch on a fallen trunk to trill for the deserters. An answering call came over the hill.

Dishes were packed and horses hitched before the others arrived, and back the party journeyed along the river-bank. The sun, forgetful of the hour, sent a golden shimmer across the water, while a breeze from the opposite shore fanned the ripples into play.

Winters, comfortable in pongee suit and cork helmet—hot weather reinforcements of Hongkong attire—was at the gate to greet them.

"I was fearing a double elopement," he announced.

"We had ample material for a single one," replied Helen. "Fortunately, I had a restraining influence."

The culprits laughed, Bob a bit uncomfortably. But Winters was looking at Harry.

"It has been a perfect day," was Ethel's naive contribution.

"Glorious!" agreed Harry.

Winters looked pleased.

"Dinner is ready," he reminded them. As the others entered the house, he patted Harry affectionately on the shoulder, and whispered, somewhat to that young man's perplexity:

"Keep it up, my boy! Keep it up!"

X

So rapidly did the first week of the house-party fly by that Freeman, with courteous hyperbole, declared he had found no time even to open his valise. The only remedy, he thought, would be to run to town to unpack. By the time the second week was well under way a movement to induce him to stay a fortnight longer was inaugurated.

"Would you leave me alone with two irresponsible women?" demanded Harry, while arguments were in progress.

"Consider the predicament in which you would place Ethel and me!" suggested Helen. "Harry from morning to night!"

Ethel's plea, while less argumentative, was not without weight. "Please stay!" she said.

Freeman stayed, profusely apologetic but unmistakably jubilant. Harry expressed extravagant thanks, Helen commended his discernment and Ethel smiled demurely. Winters returned from New York to add cordial endorsement to the decision.

"Fine!" he approved. "Suppose tomorrow we go to town, get something to eat at Mrs. Sherry's or Mrs. Rector's, invade a roof-garden, and come home on the theatre train?"

The plan was adopted unanimously.

"I can look at those collars we saw advertised," was Ethel's joyous observation.

"And I can poultice my partner's injured feelings with a few kind words," remarked Bob. "I grieve to think of the compliments he'll pay me when he learns that my vacation is extended."

Thus, with a day in town to break the agreeable routine, the house-party began anew. No daily schedule was permitted to provide a semblance of restriction: late breakfasts were followed by veranda forenoons, with lively conversation if the spirit directed, books if desired, and unblushing laziness if preferred. While it seldom happened that the four young people actually were separated, a shadowy dividing line, visible to anyone incon-

siderate enough to be observant, was gradually transforming the quartette into a double duo. Harry's devotion to Helen seemed approximately in the ratio of Bob's to Ethel—a problem easily solved by the application of a simple algebraic rule.

In Helen Harry found enjoyment of a sort wholly new to him; it was his first real acquaintance with her or with any woman. The few whom he had met at college had been on a basis of rigid formality; those of the mining village on quite a different plane. His brief visits to Wellesley, and an irregular correspondence, had afforded neither of them an insight into the other's real self, and the present meeting, therefore, was something of a revelation to both. They were studying each other, and finding the study more than mildly diverting; while to Harry, at least, possibilities of an affection quite different from brotherly were beginning to appear.

Realization of this newly developing attitude troubled Harry. To him, as to all sane men, the idea of marriage had frequently occurred, and the thought of some day possessing a home assumed an aspect of absorbing interest. No superhuman powers were needed to discover that he was in love: Helen's speaking voice was music, her singing voice—he was convinced no sweeter sounds were possible. The earth with all its equipment for diversion contained no greater pleasure than that afforded by Helen reading aloud in the arbor—though he was forced to admit that Freeman seemed to derive a satisfaction almost as keen from Miss Ethel's indulgence in a similar diversion.

That Helen remained unaware of Harry's development from brother to suitor is hardly reasonable; though whether she approved remained wholly problematical. Certain it was, however, that no drastic measures were employed to counteract a peculiar influence which regularly re-grouped four veranda chairs into a double tête-à-tête device. Apparently Helen enjoyed Harry's companionship and frankly admired his abilities, but if her

feelings went beyond that point, she took nobody into her confidence.

As to his own case, however, Harry felt that there no longer was room for speculation; the need of settling, once and for all the questions which long had troubled him was all too apparent. Had he the right to ask Helen to be his wife? Did only the ordinary considerations apply—strength of mind and body, and ability to provide a home—or was there something further to be considered? Would it be right to expect a woman of gentle breeding to wed a man in whose veins flowed the blood of an inferior race? If to him the thought of marrying a Chinese woman was repulsive, could it be less so for a Caucasian woman to think of marrying him? While he realized the injustice of the hypothetical question, he could not drive it from his mind.

One thing was certain: the question brooked no delay. If he had no right to marry, his feelings were already gaining too great a mastery; if he had the right, there was a definite task prepared for him. In his quandary he determined to seek the advice of his foster-father, a course that seemed particularly fitting as there was permission as well as counsel to be gained.

For years Winters had foreseen the problem that was bound some day to arise for Harry. Often he pondered over it, but always with the conclusion that the boy's heredity could be no reasonable impediment. He was aware, to be sure, of an almost universal prejudice against the Chinese, but failed to see how that fact affected Harry. The latter was no Chinaman; he had retained no Oriental characteristics, nor had he a single quality to stamp him as the son of a sampan woman. Far from discountenancing marriage, Winters looked forward hopefully to the time when Harry would choose a wife.

Half-suspecting the way that matters were tending, he rather anticipated what was coming one evening when Harry remained after the others had retired, and boldly announced that he had "something to talk over."

Winters smiled encouragingly. "What is it, my boy?" he asked. "Sit down, and we'll have one of our old-time conferences."

"It's this, sir," began Harry deliberately. "I want your frank opinion. Do you believe that my Chinese blood disqualifies me for marriage?"

Winters's answer was as prompt as it was positive.

"Not for an instant! Why should it?"

"Well," hesitatingly, "for several reasons."

"What, pray?"

"In the first place, a mixed marriage might affect a girl's social status."

"Mixed marriage—how could your union with an American woman be called a mixed marriage? You *are* an American, aren't you? You're on an equality with every other American, aren't you? You're self-supporting. Any girl should be proud to have you."

"But I've the Chinese blood, just the same," smiled Harry. He earnestly had hoped for Winters's support, but hardly had anticipated so positive a stand. Now that the older man's views were known, he was determined to thresh out the subject to its completion.

"What outward sign of it have you," demanded Winters, "or inward one, for that matter? In thought and act and appearance you're a white man—by every known token——"

"Except fact."

"Fact be blowed! I'm telling you what you are, not what you might have been."

"But have you considered the possible prejudice—the——?"

"Nonsense! Absurd to suggest it."

"Then you really feel that my origin is no hindrance to my asking a girl to marry?" he went on, preliminary to a more specific proposition.

But the need of broaching the latter was obviated by Winters's reply.

"Do you suppose, my boy, that I haven't given this matter quite as much thought as you? Have you the egotism to believe that I've been unable

to see which way the wind has been blowing?"

"Do you mean," stammered Harry, "that—that you've guessed——?"

"That a courtship has been in progress beneath my nose for a fortnight? I've a faint idea I have."

"And—you approve?"

"I always supposed it a daughter's prerogative, not a son's, to ask the 'old man's' permission. Doubtless Helen will have 'something to talk over' in due season. But your job, young man, is to go in and win. Have you asked her yet?"

Harry shook his head.

"I wished to get this other point definitely settled first. And you're sure," happily, "you approve?"

"My blessing is wrapped up for delivery when needed."

"You've lifted a terrific weight off my mind," declared Harry, gripping his foster-father's hand. "I don't know how to thank you."

"Save your thanks for a certain young woman," was the other's dry suggestion. "And now," beamingly, "let's have a Dock and Dorris and go to bed. Will you play mixer?—the stuff's all there on the buffet."

A moment later Winters raised his glass.

"Here's success to your suit, my boy," said he. "You're to go in and win, remember!"

"I'll do my best, you may be sure. Good night, sir."

"Good night, old man."

For a long time that night Harry lay staring at the ceiling, tumultuously happy. And even after falling asleep the words kept ringing in his ears, "Go in and win!"

XI

"So you're tired of hearing me say it?"

The disconsolate young man asking the question raised himself on his elbow and looked woefully meditative.

"No-o," ingenuously. "I rather like it. But what's it going to accomplish, Harry?"

They were reclining on a patch of grass some distance from the house, where a broad elm obligingly supplied an abundance of shade. Though the fact might not be apparent at first blush, they were hurrying to the village for a spool of No. 60 cotton, which Ethel had been good enough to find that she required.

Several days had passed since the go-in-and-win resolution, but results so far had not been satisfactory. Still there had been one or two concessions on minor issues to encourage persistent perseverance.

"Now look here, little woman," he continued with pathetic seriousness, "you know perfectly well what I *want* to accomplish. The only method I'm familiar with is to keep on telling you I love you. Personally, I don't care if I get the habit, and announce my feelings at the breakfast-table."

"I do!" in alarm. "And, by the way, if you persist in wearing that ardent look whenever I chance to say good morning or remark that it's a pleasant day, I simply shall have to—you must stop it, that's all, Harry! It isn't delicate!"

"I'll try," he promised meekly.

"You must," unbendingly. "Ethel has spoken of your attitude several times."

"I should think that she might better confine her comments to a subject more directly concerning her. Heaven knows there's reason."

"Do you suppose they're engaged?"

"Probably; at least Ethel is a reasonable sort of girl. Little woman," desperately, "don't you think you might be able to care for me just a little?"

"Now listen, little man," with a mischievous smile as he bit his lip impatiently, "I'm going to talk seriously."

"For the love of heaven, don't you think I've been? If I could only show you——"

"Also," discouragingly. "I'm going to be quite frank."

"Yes?" with ill-concealed nervousness.

"I do love you very much——"

"You *do*?"

"As a good little sister should. But why ask for any other kind?"

Harry's hopeful look vanished as quickly as it had appeared.

"There's every reason," with grim determination. "I'm quite willing to go over this time and again—fifty times, if necessary. I sha'n't try to be rational. Love isn't a subject that can be figured out with a pencil. It's no use trying to be logical and advance fifteen unanswerable arguments to show why I want you to marry me. All I know is I love you. I want you, and want you to want me. *Please* listen!" imploringly, as he caught a wicked little twinkle. "I don't expect an answer—right now, that is——"

"Why ask, then?"

"Because—because I love you, I suppose. But I'll not again—for a while, that is. And then," eagerly, "you can just say 'yes' when you've thought it all over!"

"Nothing more simple!" she laughed.

"You dear old boy!"

But if her tone was encouraging, her next remark was not: "Now suppose we drop the subject."

"*What?* Never!" impetuously. "Never so long as I can speak—and even then I'll make signs!"

"Look here, Harry; this mustn't go on. Besides, it's late. If you've anything more to say, please be quick, for we must hurry home."

"Do you love me a little?" in desperation.

"I've told you!" reprovingly. "I do—a great deal—as a sister. Why, it takes a *tremendous* amount of love to want to marry a person."

"But——"

"We're congenial pals—that's all. Why can't we just keep on being?"

"Because we can't," with asperity. "Don't you see? I want you for a wife—not a distant relative. We'd be better 'pals' than ever then. We could have a cozy little home, and a lot of friends, and a——"

"Stop! stop!" she laughed, foreseeing an array of optimistic details. "Come, we must hurry home. And we haven't the thread, either! What shall we tell Ethel!"

"She won't even remember. She's too deeply interested in Bob."

"Come!" imperiously.

"Please wait a minute. Say *perhaps* you care enough!"

"I've told you how I felt, Harry."

"But say it, anyway!"

"How absurd!"

His look became more determined.

"If we don't get home until early next week, we're going to remain here until you say 'perhaps'!"

The situation being one calling for radical measures, he grasped her wrist, not tightly, but sufficiently so as to render escape inexpedient.

"But, Harry," she expostulated weakly, "we must go."

"Say 'perhaps,' then."

"It's past luncheon-time."

"Say 'perhaps'!"

"But it's so ridiculous," she argued, finding that an expression of pathetic appeal failed to move him. "Do you think that anything said under compulsion could count?"

"Not unless you mean it."

"But I don't."

"Then here we stay."

For a minute longer Helen remained defiant, while her captor budged not an inch. Then like a sensible girl she capitulated.

"Perhaps, then," she said, with a pout.

"Do you mean it?" warily.

Again she rebelled, but again feminine discretion prevailed.

"I suppose so," she admitted at last.

A self-satisfied young man assisted an indignant young woman to her feet, and with surprising complacency accepted her intimation that he was unfair, ungentlemanly and brutal. The homeward journey, however, was devoted mainly to concocting a plausible excuse for their failure to get the thread, but happily none was needed: the veranda was found deserted. Fully fifteen minutes elapsed before Bob and

Ethel, suspiciously unconcerned, sauntered up the walk.

"Luncheon is getting cold," was Helen's reproving greeting.

"May I ask if you intend to starve us?" demanded Harry.

"For my part," confessed Bob without a tremor, "I shouldn't particularly mind if I never ate!"

Helen and Ethel exchanged quick glances, and the four went in to luncheon.

Even though the midday meal was nearly an hour late, none of the quartette appeared to possess a normal appetite; each seemed to prefer quiet meditation to general conversation. Luncheon over, the young women took prompt departure, leaving the boys to smoke in contented silence on the veranda. Not until five o'clock did the girls reappear from above, hatted and gloved for a drive.

"Off to meet father," Helen explained. "Do you two wish to come?"

"You two" did, and with alacrity. The trap was summoned and soon with a passenger-list of four was spinning toward the station, which was reached as a faint line of smoke far down the track announced an approaching train.

"Father is more apt to be on the express," explained Helen. "It's due in five minutes. That is the 'local.'"

Her surmise evidently was correct, for the only passenger alighting when the train came puffing in was a Chinese laundryman bearing a huge blue bundle. The odd figure shambling along the platform caught Ethel's eye and called forth immediate comment.

"My! what an uncanny creature. Ugh!" Without knowing the delicacy of the subject, she proceeded to offer her views of Celestials in general. "What a disgusting people they are!" she remarked.

In desperation Helen felt for the speaker's foot, while its owner babbled innocently on.

"Every Chinaman I ever have seen has had such a wily, untrustworthy look. Then they're all so—so unlike human beings. Ugh! I'm positively afraid of them. In Washington I have

met members of the Chinese diplomatic corps that have affected me the same way. Every time one came near me——"

Helen's foot finally reached its goal, and Ethel paused wonderingly. With an eye to relieving the situation Bob called attention to a big red motor-car whizzing by, and the episode was ended. Harry, flushed and miserable, stared blankly into space, while Helen felt scarcely less at ease. Even Winters's timely arrival on the next train did not wholly dispel the feeling of restraint that settled over the party.

"Been quarreling?" was his bluff query.

"Harry stole my marbles, and I slapped his face," explained the ever-resourceful Bob.

The situation was saved, but the homeward drive was unusually quiet.

Home at last, Helen gently drew Harry aside as the others entered the house.

"Don't mind, boy," she whispered.

The sympathetic little squeeze that she gave his arm was wonderfully consoling, but his heart was heavy as lead. A feeling of vague hopelessness seemed to have taken possession of him, while on her part Helen was conscious of a wretched misgiving that never before had seemed quite just or reasonable.

"You blessed little woman!" he managed to say. He smiled bravely, but it cost an effort.

Going to her room, Helen found a further ordeal awaiting her. Ethel confronted her, mystified but determined.

"What did I say? Tell me!" was Miss Edwards's tearful entreaty. "What was my horrible *faux pas*?"

An instant's reflection was enough to convince Helen that but one course was open—frank acknowledgment of the embarrassing truth. With consummate tact she explained the situation, revealing Harry's peculiar lineage and referring gently to his over-sensitive-ness.

For a moment Ethel's chagrin was overshadowed by amazement. Helen's foster-brother a part-Chinaman! Im-

possible! Unconsciously she gave a shudder which her hostess did not fail to see, and only with an effort did she regain her self-possession.

"Helen, dear, I'm so mortified and miserable," she declared earnestly.

"Let's think no more about it," was Helen's suggestion. "It wasn't your fault, dear. You didn't know. And the fact that he has Oriental blood isn't of any real consequence, is it?"

"No-o, of course not," nervously. "I—I was surprised, that's all."

"Now let us forget all about it. Shall we get ready for dinner?"

But try as she would to forget, Ethel found it a constant struggle to keep her mind off the astounding revelation—and equally difficult to maintain her former attitude toward her hostess's foster-brother. In his presence she felt self-conscious and uneasy. Nor was the recollection of her unfortunate remark alone responsible; there was a feeling of repugnance which she found herself quite unable to overcome. With reasonable success she concealed it, but it was none the less real and persistent.

For a day or two an indescribable damper settled over the house-party. The young people were peculiarly restless, and with almost a sense of relief each secretly looked forward to the week's close. Winters alone was unconscious of anything amiss.

During this trying period Harry seldom found himself alone with Helen, and even then for some vague reason refrained from referring to her half-promised capitulation. The two would chat quietly and unaffectedly, but neither seemed inclined to resume the subject. Intuitively Harry felt that his chances had suddenly lessened, while Helen struggled with emotions equally troubled and conflicting. The future never had looked so ominous.

At last the evening before the guests' departure arrived.

"And how shall we wind up our month of dissipation?" asked the hostess at dinner. "Land or water orgy?"

"Why not a cruise on the *Lulu Ann*?" suggested Harry.

"Capital idea!" agreed Miss Edwards.

"Splendid!" echoed Helen. "We'll secure a cargo of sandwiches and things and set forth on a voyage of discovery. Join us, daddykins?"

"Risk sea-sickness on the raging Hudson! Not by a good deal! I've a business engagement, my dear. But I'll be at the dock to salute the *Lulu Ann* on her triumphant return."

"Then we'll have dinner on the lawn!"

Whereupon all expressed extravagant approval, while Bob furnished endorsement for a nautical programme by hornpiping to the door with a lusty, if not tuneful, "Cheerily, my lads, y'ho!"

XII

THE day's outing helped materially to restore the old, unaffected footing. Early in the forenoon the *Lulu Ann* was dragged from her decent seclusion in the boat-house—a residence shared with a graceful little naphtha launch—and forced into the water amid much unseemly merriment.

"The lady appears to have an aggravated case of corpulency," observed Bob, gravely surveying the bulging beam.

"She probably needs exercise," suggested Harry.

"Looks like a speedy old damsel."

"Don't be disrespectful," pleaded Helen. "*Ann*, like myself, is a sensible spinster, and values character above mere physical attractiveness."

"Hurrah for her beautiful soul!" cried Bob.

With banter equally unpardonable they clambered into the roomy old craft, and boldly set forth on their voyage. Upstream their course first lay, and laboriously they plowed through the ripples, with time and speed negligible factors. Finally, after a display of seamanship which Freeman, the navigator, modestly pronounced the

best he ever had witnessed, the voyagers landed on an unknown coast and promptly preempted it by right of discovery. Sandwich cargo landed, shawls were spread and a rest for the day declared.

The sun peeped playfully through the cool foliage, and the water rippled tunelessly on the beach near-by. For several hours after luncheon they lingered, and not until late in the afternoon was the homeward voyage begun. With a brisk breeze to assist the current the *Lulu Ann* traveled through the water at a speed that must have astonished her mightily.

"Wheel!" cried Helen exultantly. "Hurrah for the roaring main!"

"And there's the house already!" exclaimed Ethel, as the boat rounded the bend and the Winters establishment came dimly into view through the mist.

"We'll keep on until we're opposite, and then tack," sang out Bob. "And at this rate it won't be long."

He was at the helm, Harry tending the ungainly sail, while the girls were allotted the space intervening—Ethel on deck, and Helen above the miniature cabin. As Harry watched a mass of fluffy hair blowing about his foster-sister's pretty face, he solemnly assured himself that no more beautiful sight existed anywhere; while Bob, interested in quite a different direction, devoted fully as much attention to the occupant of a becoming yachting-suit as to the responsible duties of navigator.

"Look out now!" the skipper cried. "Coming round."

The tiller was given a sharp turn, the same instant an unexpected gust of wind caught the sail, and the warning came too late. With a whir the heavy boom swung across, sweeping Helen into the water.

A second splash followed. Instinctively Harry had leaped to the rescue, and the next instant two forms rose to the surface, Helen blindly struggling in her foster-brother's arms, interfering greatly with his efforts to save her.

"Just a minute!" cried Bob excitedly. "We'll be there!"

His voice reassured them, and Helen ceased her blind resistance, while Harry began to cope with the situation more intelligently.

"Kick—kick hard!" he managed to gasp as he secured a freer hold. He made an effort to loosen his collar, but without success, and his shoes proved a severe handicap. Expert swimmer though he was, the strain was beginning to tell.

Pluckily Helen struck out as directed and the chances of rescue became more hopeful.

In the boat Bob was experiencing the greatest difficulty. With Ethel too frightened to be of assistance, he found that all his strength was needed to turn the clumsy craft, which had drifted some distance away from the spot where the accident had occurred. As soon as he could lower the sail he seized an oar and worked with desperation. Several minutes—which seemed hours—elapsed, but at last he reached the spot and secured a hold on Helen's garments. Using all his strength he drew the girl into the boat, leaving Harry clinging to the side, apparently safe. Without delay he laid her, fainting, on deck, and turned quickly to assist the man in the water, when to his horror he saw the hand on the gunwale relax and sink slowly from view.

Dazed and helpless Freeman stood, unable to move or think, but a scream from Ethel brought him to his senses. But what should he do? To leap overboard would be worse than folly; the girls would be powerless to control the boat, and he would be throwing his life away.

Anxiously he peered into the water, but no sign of the drowning man could be seen. Minutes seemed to pass, and then without warning Harry's face, drawn and ghastly, rose to the surface not ten feet away; but strength had gone, and probably consciousness; for the mouth was open and the eyes were wildly staring. Bob seized the oar and quickly swung the boat around—but too late! The blanched face vanished as suddenly as it had appeared.

Freeman's courage began to fail; he realized that the chances were now too

slender to offer hope, and his heart stood still. Helen, returned to consciousness, awoke to a sudden realization of the situation, and mingled her frightened sobs with those of her companion.

"You must—you must save him!" she cried hysterically. "Harry! Harry!"

Ethel wept piteously, her face buried in her hands.

Prepared to accept the slender chance, Bob tore off his coat and stood ready to leap the instant the face should reappear. Eagerly he scanned the water, while the frightened girls watched him spellbound, reading in his eyes the hopelessness which he dared not express. Then suddenly, as his gaze wandered, they saw him drop to his knees and bend over the side of the boat. Bubbles had risen to the surface scarcely a foot away, and he knew their meaning. Barely had his hand touched the water when the head reached the surface. Lying prostrate, he managed to clutch Harry's hand and with a supreme effort drag the body into the boat. Then he sank on the deck exhausted.

Signs of commotion on shore indicated that the accident had been witnessed, and already the launch was steaming toward them. Five minutes later the sailboat was being towed ashore.

Not a move did Harry make as he lay in a pool of water, nor did the hasty measures which were taken seem of the slightest avail. On the dock near the house Winters—just home from the city—was pacing up and down, frantic with apprehension, and as the two boats neared shore he read nothing in the faces of the occupants to relieve his fears.

Hurriedly, as the boat touched the pier, the body was borne to the house, where everything was prepared pending the arrival of the village doctor. Ethel, after bearing up bravely, collapsed completely and was carried to her room, but Helen, now remarkably composed, insisted upon returning to Harry's side. Bob scoffed at the idea of leaving even to change his clothes.

The fatherly old physician shook his head when he saw the patient, and

more dubious still did he look after a hasty examination. Harry's lungs were freed of water, his body was swathed in blankets and vigorously chafed, but still no signs of life were apparent. No movement of the lips or nostrils was discernible, and the eyes were vacant and staring. As those about the bedside studied the doctor's face, they felt to a certainty the boy was dead.

But the heart still was beating! Dr. Carlton gave a smile of encouragement as he glanced up a moment later; then quietly, deftly resumed his efforts to start the respiration. For fifteen minutes he toiled away, asking only occasional assistance of those beside him, and though no appreciable effect was discernible, the same grim smile continued to play on his firm, determined lips. Once he glanced up to mutter, "We'll win yet!" then down he bent again.

With lips tightly pressed, Helen—far calmer than her father or Freeman—stood ready to do the doctor's bidding. Noiselessly she brought compresses and applied them as directed, and patiently she waited, her eyes intent on Harry's face, praying, praying that life might be restored. The minutes dragged, slowly, monotonously, but her self-control did not desert her until the doctor finally announced that the crisis was passed and immediate danger over. Then, as she heard her father's fervent "Thank God!" her feelings conquered and she wept quietly in a corner.

Winters, who had hastened below to report the encouraging news, returned to find her calm and smiling.

"Go down, dear, for a cup of coffee," he begged.

"No, you and Dr. Carlton go," she insisted. "I'll stay and watch."

The kindly old doctor smiled.

"He'll not regain consciousness for some time," he said; "perhaps not until morning. Suppose we go for a bite to eat, and leave Maggie here."

"I wish to stay," she repeated quietly, and they were forced to accede.

The old physician, quite worn out with his efforts, followed Winters to the dining-room, where Bob was having his dinner in solitude, Ethel being still too unnerved to leave her room.

Left alone, Helen drew a chair to the bedside, and anxiously scanned the face on the pillow. Harry's breathing was labored and irregular—almost painful—while one arm hung limply over the covers, its fingers twitching convulsively.

For a quarter of an hour she sat, her gaze intent upon the bed; and then without warning the patient opened his eyes.

Helen leaned forward eagerly. "Harry!" she whispered.

Slowly, with seeming effort, the eyes, which first had stared blankly at the ceiling, turned in the direction of the voice, but their look was dull and vacant; consciousness had not returned. A smile flickered on the lips, but the listless expression gave no sign of recognition.

"Harry!" she repeated, this time more loudly.

Still he stared, unseeing. His appearance alarmed her, and she seized the hand thrashing about the covers, but found it warm and moist, while a trace of color was returning to the cheeks. But the eyes remained blank and lusterless.

Again she spoke, now thoroughly frightened: "Harry! Harry!"

The eyes closed wearily—opened again—then closed. But in that scant second a change seemed noticeable; he saw her—knew her! Nervously his hand passed over his forehead, and the muscles of his face twitched peculiarly. His lips moved, and he spoke:

"Helen."

"I'm here," she cried gladly, leaning over the bed.

But the vacant look returned, and he did not answer. A few moments later he seemed as deep in stupor as before.

With the same suddenness with which the first spark of consciousness had appeared he soon began to speak—

to laugh and mutter broken sentences; several times she caught her name.

"Say 'perhaps,' Helen!" he whispered, with a chuckle. "Say it, and we'll go." The memory of the roadside incident was flitting across his awakening senses, but his smile was the smile of a sick man, forced and dry and painful.

He continued to mutter incoherently, while Helen listened affrighted.

"Say 'perhaps!'" he demanded again.

The strain was becoming too great, and she felt an impulse to scream. The sight of a strong man babbling was gruesome and uncanny.

"Harry!" she cried in desperation, vaguely hoping to arouse him.

The patient stirred, while she shrank back in suspense. His eyes opened wide, and Harry—Harry himself—looked up in bewilderment. Before she could check him he was sitting up, gazing about in wonder. Then, as the memory of the accident returned, he allowed himself to be forced gently back on the pillow.

"So—it's all right?" he whispered, with a feeble smile. "And we're not floundering about at the bottom of the Hudson?"

"Don't—don't!" she begged.

He patted her small hand as she smoothed his hair. "I'm mighty glad," he avowed soberly.

"And oh! how glad I am—how glad," she sobbed. "You don't know how good it seems to know that you're safe—safe!"

She wept softly, while he sought tenderly to comfort. "You poor little woman!" he said. "You poor, precious little woman!"

Somewhat shamefaced at her weakness, she composed herself to rearrange the covers and gently smooth the hair from his moist forehead.

"You were a bad boy to frighten me," she declared. "Don't you ever dare have delirium again! And now, dear, go to sleep."

"Was I delirious? What did I say?"

"Not now. Go to sleep!"

"But what—?"

"Sh!"

"Tell me, please!"

"Well," with an accommodating smile, "you were commanding somebody—whom I don't know—to say 'perhaps.'"

"To *what*—oh! And did she?"

"I'm afraid she didn't."

"Are you sure?" anxiously.

Helen shook her head.

"She did once," he reminded her wistfully. "Won't she again—once?"

For an instant Helen wavered. Then, as she looked into his appealing eyes, and felt the pressure of a still-weak hand, she buried her face beside his in the pillow, and sobbed:

"She'll say more than that, dearie! She'll say 'yes'—if you really wish her to!"

XIII

THE next morning Freeman and Miss Edwards took their departure, assured that Harry was on the road to recovery. Winters was too upset by the ordeal to care whether his guests remained or not; while Helen, with a newly-found happiness following close on the heels of despair, would not particularly have minded had the entire household—with the essential exception of the sick man—taken temporary leave.

The doctor insisted that his patient remain quiet, but oddly enough Harry made a most complacent invalid.

"I'm quite willing to keep this up indefinitely," he shamelessly confided to his nurse. It was two days after the accident, and she was seated on the edge of his sofa and reading aloud. "If my feeble condition should not continue, I should take prompt steps to bring on a relapse."

"Bless your heart! But remember, dear, I'm reading. Don't interrupt."

"Yes'm," meekly.

The magazine story was resumed, and for fully four minutes the patient listened.

"Do you mind my observing," he ventured at the end of that period, "that to my mind you're far and away

the most beautiful thing in existence?"

"I do—most decidedly. And it's rude to talk when I'm doing my best to entertain you."

"Also," judiciously, ignoring the rebuke, "I should say one of the most precious. Now——"

"Dearie, how do you expect me to keep on if you act this way?"

"Very well. I'll be good."

"Just content yourself with learning the virtues of the Beautiful Cecilia, instead of going into rhapsodies over mine—which, of course, I know all about."

"Who is the Beautiful Cecilia?"

"Do you mean you haven't heard what I've been reading?" with some asperity.

"I have, dear—really," he laughed.

"Please go on."

She relented, and the fresh start seemed most propitious. The invalid lay back, smilingly silent, availing himself merely of a sick man's established privilege of holding his nurse's hand. Absorbed though he was in the story, he found it surprisingly agreeable to press those slender fingers while their owner remained obligingly oblivious. Unquestionably the intellectual benefits derived from the reading were great, but in his innermost heart Harry had an unworthy conviction that an aged almanac or a telephone directory under similar conditions would develop into fascinating literature.

"Now that's quite unnecessary! The Beautiful Cecilia would never have approved."

The occasion of the reproof was trivial; in changing his position Harry had chanced to bring her hand perilously near his lips. To have drawn it no nearer would have been improvident and unreasonable.

"I assure you it was wholly accidental—and absolutely harmless—and wholly delightful," he declared. "Please don't mind me. Go on with the story."

A look of pretty displeasure was his punishment, but nevertheless the reading was continued. *En passant*, the hand remained where it was.

For fifteen minutes longer the patient listened, gazing rapturously at the reader. Several times he absent-mindedly kissed the tips of the fingers he was holding, but his look was obviously of such innocent abstraction that Helen rightly felt unwarranted in noticing the distressing incidents. At last, however, symptoms of absent-mindedness recurred with such alarming frequency that she closed the book in despair.

"Evidently," she remarked severely, "you have had enough for one day."

"Indeed not. Please don't stop."

"We'll indulge in polite conversation for a change."

"Very well," he said, prudently securing possession of the other hand as well.

"That doesn't seem altogether necessary. But never mind, Engaged Man, if you'll only talk. And now," nestling back contentedly, "where shall we begin?"

"I think," was his reasonable suggestion, "about here," as he accomplished the difficult feat of kissing five fingers simultaneously. "Or possibly here," selecting the other five.

"No, be serious—please! Let us talk matters over sensibly."

"Very well. Let's."

"When shall we break the festive news to father?"

"Any time you say, dear. Though it is rather comfy, isn't it, to have the secret our exclusive property for a day or two?"

She nodded, with a smile.

"I wonder why he doesn't guess," he mused. "Seems odd to give enthusiastic approval in advance, and then make no inquiry about the outcome."

"Doesn't it?" she agreed. "And yet," wisely, "we can't deceive daddy long. He's pretty observant, bless him."

"I wonder if it mightn't be best to tell him at once."

"Suppose we wait until Saturday, and then make a grand family announcement!"

"Capital! That will give us four days. And I leave for the West on Monday, you know."

"Why?" with feminine unreasonableness.

"To make great quantities of money for a home—and other incidentals. I've been away too long!"

"So that's the way you feel?"

"For work's sake, of course!"

"But suppose you aren't well enough?"

"I shall be," confidently.

"It won't be at all considerate if you are. But still the magnetic-separator is calling, I suppose. Won't it be fine if it's a success!"

"It's bound to be now!"

"Bless your heart! It's nice to talk things over, isn't it? Let's keep on!"

"Let's! To resume, then—I love you, little woman."

"That's not news especially. Besides, I do you—a little."

"Honest-to-goodness and cross your heart?"

"Oh, sort of," airily.

"And you're not quite sure?" anxiously.

"Of course, silly boy."

"Do you know," soberly, "I've been rather worried and troubled a bit?"

"Why?"

"Lest you might have said 'yes' impulsively—because of some foolish notion that I had helped rescue you, or something of that sort."

"Bob helped, too," slyly, "and I haven't felt constrained to marry him."

"And you're quite sure you meant what you said, and aren't sorry?"

A kiss was the convincing evidence that she offered.

"But suppose, dear," he pursued doggedly, "I should prove a handicap on account of my confounded lineage. Have you seriously thought what it all means?"

"Foolish boy, of course!"

"I'd give you up, little woman, really I would, if I thought——"

Her hand was clapped over his lips.

"If you're going to talk that way, I shall forget my beautiful disposition, and get angry. Honey, I couldn't love you any more if your ancestors had been Mr. and Mrs. George Washington."

At this psychological moment Winters arrived from the city.

"How's the sick man?" was his salutation, after kissing Helen and submitting to the agreeable annoyance of having his cravat readjusted.

"Absurdly well," was Harry's answer. "It's a disgrace to lie here."

"Tush! The rest will do you good," declared Winters, falling back on the consoling assurance with which the bedridden ever are comforted. "And how is your nurse behaving?"

"A guaranteed angel couldn't begin to give such satisfaction. Simply a blessed wonder. Hasn't let me raise a finger—except hers!" with a grin which was rewarded with a look of withering disapproval.

"Does her work well—eh? Wouldn't care to change?"

"Not on your bloomin' life," was the emphatic answer.

"Well, well, that's funny!"

Winters went to his room, leaving the couple to place their own construction on his hilarity.

"I suspect he suspects," said Helen judiciously.

"It looks like it," smiled Harry.

With a hasty, but none the less acceptable, kiss on the tip of his nose—a reward for being good while she was at dinner—he was left alone to weigh his contentment and ponder over the source of true happiness.

The next day improvement was so marked that Harry was promoted from the library lounge to the veranda, while the following afternoon he was held in restraint only by the promise of a walk the day after, provided the sun would shine. That single condition being met by the weather authorities, the sick man and his faithful nurse set forth at the appointed hour in quest of health and recuperation.

"Are you sure, dear, you're quite able to walk?" Harry was asked, when they had proceeded a few steps from the house.

"I'm afraid not," was his despondent answer. "I'm going to run, instead."

Whereupon, ignoring all ethics of

invalidism and his nurse's cry of alarm, he shot down the road at a ten-second clip, stopping only to turn about and scamper back again.

"You foolish boy!" cried Helen, almost in tears. "You—you suicide!"

"Great!" he panted, the small boy in him tingling with pleasure. "One more spurt, then I'll be docile again."

"No—please!" she begged, clutching his coat-sleeve.

"Not even a dinky little ten yards?"

"Not an inch. Please be good!"

"Very well," resignedly. "But I wish you knew how good it felt to unlimber again."

"Well, please confine your unlimbering to sedate and proper strolling—unless you plan to stay here weeks, that is."

"Monday isn't so far away, is it?" he suggested soberly.

"Are you sure you must go then?"

"Positive. But don't let that deter you from urging me to stay. 'Please don't go' sounds pow'ful good!"

"Does it, hun? As usual, then, I'll be accommodating. Please don't go, Harry."

"You blessed small woman! Do you know," in a burst of enthusiasm, "I wish I could find an adequate reason why I should be the most fortunate man on earth! It frightens me to think how many million men there are who would commit any crime in the calendar to hear you say 'Please don't go' to them."

"Don't worry," she laughed. "I've no desire to incite crime. . . . But look here, boy, why should we be standing when we might sit over there on the grass?"

The suggestion was accepted with alacrity, and a moment later they were resting on a shawl which prudence had prompted bringing.

"Do you recognize this spot?" she inquired.

"Rather!" reminiscently.

"Here was I forced by threats of violence to make an absurd admission. But, of course, any admission made under duress never could be binding in the world."

"And it was made against your will?"

"Of course," severely.

"Positive?"

"Positive."

Harry's smile quickly vanished, and an expression of unmistakable anxiety took its place.

"Sure?" he pursued tremulously.

Helen's laugh was gleeful. "You silly boy! I mustn't encourage depression in my patient, so I'll tell him—purely for this reason, mind you!—that I couldn't care more for anybody. As a matter of fact," archly, "I might have been induced—compelled, I mean—to say 'yes' quite as readily."

"You blessedest girl!"

To the mortification of a respectable cow peering through the fence rails, something happened.

"And now," remarked Helen, prudently smoothing back a rebellious lock, "let's behave like dignified and respectable engaged people."

"By all means. Do you mind my lying down?"

"Are you tired?"

"Completely worn out. May have a relapse any minute."

Alarm over his condition was apparently warranted, for the next moment he was stretched out at full length, while his brow was being stroked as if he were suffering with a headache.

The cow looked sympathetic, but still a bit scandalized.

But even as the gentle bovine had the tact to withdraw, it ill behooves superior human beings to intrude. Suffice it to be known that Harry's headache had vanished by dinner-time, while Helen's apprehension seemed largely to have disappeared.

At the exemplary hour of nine the convalescent bade his foster-father good night; Helen followed him to the hall.

"Good night, dear," she whispered.

"Remember we spread the glad tidings tomorrow."

"I've not forgotten," he assured her.

"Good night, little woman."

Then, as she returned to the library to chat as a dutiful daughter should,

Harry went to his room to court sleep with the afternoon's unanswered problem—why was he the happiest of men?

XIV

"By the way," boasted Winters at the table the following evening, "it was my proud duty to put Satan far behind me today."

"Indeed?" laughed Helen. "How?"

"Burglary, larceny or manslaughter?" queried Harry.

"Nothing like it. I was sorely tempted though, and I resisted."

"Good for my daddy!" applauded Helen. "Tell us—quickly!"

"I came very near—in fact, all but made up my mind—to return to Hongkong."

"Hongkong!" echoed the others. "To stay?" demanded Helen.

"Oh, no," laughed Winters. "Not quite. But I thought I might make a trip over on business."

"That's different," was the relieved answer.

"You see, there are some matters to be attended to in connection with winding up my affairs over there, and it struck me as an opportunity to see the old stamping ground again."

"And why not?" queried Helen approvingly. "It would do you worlds of good."

"I shouldn't dare take the risk," with a twinkle. "Once there, I might never be able to tear myself away from the club veranda."

"In that case," firmly, "you stay right here!"

"As I said," he laughed, "I already have resisted."

"And who is going for you?" asked Harry.

"Someone from the office, I suppose. There are several young chaps ready enough to seize the chance."

Harry was too deeply concerned in a matter peculiarly of personal interest to give much thought to other themes. Immediately after dinner he went outside and perched himself on the steps, where he was engaged in a critical study

of twilight effects on the Hudson, when Helen—who had gone to the garden—returned excitedly waving a letter whose appearance gave evidence of having been in Patrick's pocket since morning.

"What do you think?" she cried.

"What?" with languid interest.

"A letter!"

"So I observe," with an exasperating smile.

"From Ethel. And she's going to announce her engagement to Bob!"

A low whistle from Harry indicated that he was not excitement proof, after all.

"They've known each other just a month," was his amused comment.

"And how long," rebukingly, "did it take us to become engaged, may I ask? I think it's lovely!"

"Of course! Bully!"

"And now," excitedly, "I must go in and tell daddy."

"Do! That will give me time to rehearse my little speech some more."

"So that's the cause of your worried expression! For shame!"

"I'm in a regular purple funk."

"I repeat—shame!"

"Dearie," in desperation, "don't you suppose we could do it better together?"

"Indeed not! It is your place, and you must act like a little man."

"But I got his consent once."

"That makes it all the easier now. No, sir, this is my single opportunity to get married, and I propose to have all formalities complied with."

"And you won't help me out?"

"Simply with advance spiritual comforts. I'll tell you, though," with sudden inspiration. "I'll go first and publish the news about Ethel. Then the minute I make my exit you enter and recite your little piece. Isn't that an inspiration!" clapping her hands.

His expression failed somehow to reflect her enthusiasm. "It is indeed," joylessly.

"Be ready, then, when I come out."

"Not quite yet," he pleaded. "Give me time to get in trim."

"You'll have ample!" she informed him. "Au revoir."

She ran into the house, leaving him nervously pacing the porch.

As Helen entered the library, her father smiled and laid aside his paper. "Hello, dear," said he. "What's all the excitement? It sounded as if you and Harry were having a joint debate outside!"

"Were we as disorderly as that? But I've news, daddykins, great, big news!"

"Indeed! What, pray?"

"You couldn't guess in a century!"

"I haven't time to try, then."

"Well," with pleasurable deliberation, "it's an engagement; Ethel is to marry Bob Freeman!"

"What!"

The astonishment that Helen had anticipated was unquestionably in evidence, but also bewilderment and perplexity.

"Marry *whom*?" he asked.

"Why, Bob, of course! Surprised? I *knew* you'd be!"

"Yes; most decidedly," was his answer. "And—and what has Harry to say—does he know?" with a searching look and a show of anxiety.

"Why, yes; and he's as delighted as I am. And think—the whole romance took place under this hospitable roof! Isn't it *scrumptious*!"

"Yes, yes, of course," absently.

"Why, you don't seem a bit enthusiastic!"

There was a trace of disappointment in Helen's voice. Somehow her sensation seemed to be falling somewhat flat.

"It's an excellent match, I'm sure," was Winters's rejoinder. He buried himself in his paper, as if no longer interested.

"Of all rude fathers!" was Helen's grieved protest, as she left him. What could be the matter?

No sooner had she gone than Winters dropped his paper and stared into space.

"What can it mean?" he pondered. "Harry pleased? Impossible! I can't understand it."

Suddenly a look of startled comprehension overspread his face.

"Can it mean," he gasped, "that Harry loves *Helen*, not *Ethel*!"

Instantly he understood, and simultaneously a thousand protests—instinctive, but none the less compelling—rose within him.

"My God! what have I done?" he exclaimed nervously.

His views underwent a complete revulsion, and deep in his heart he knew that marriage between Harry and Helen was impossible. Each moment's reflection but added to that conviction.

"It would never do!" he muttered fiercely. "Never!" He mopped his brow and tried to collect his scattered thoughts.

Recollection of the encouragement he unwittingly had given but added to his chagrin and apprehension, and engendered a feeling of distinct antagonism. Reasons forbidding Helen's union with a man of an alien race crowded one after another into his agitated mind, each lending weight to his intuitive opposition. What mattered it, he asked, if the disqualified suitor were his foster-son? Did that alter the situation? Was not his first duty to his daughter? Would Margaret have sanctioned such a match? Would she have permitted Helen's marriage to a half-caste Chinaman? At last he was compelled to recognize the weight of arguments that for years he had rejected as trivial.

For the moment his love for Harry seemed negligible: his whole thought was for Helen. He could feel himself becoming bitter and resentful: Harry was an intruder; his devotion to Helen an impertinence and an insult.

Specific argument came to strengthen instinctive protest. No matter how successfully external evidences had been effaced, the taint of blood remained. Harry was an Asiatic, a part-Chinaman. Would it be possible for him, Winters, an American born and bred, to accept with complacency a half-caste son-in-law?

"It would be a crime!" he muttered, as he rose and paced the floor. "It would be a—" He turned to find himself face to face with Harry. With

courage keyed to the requisite pitch the latter had entered the library, but all thought of his mission was quickly forgotten on finding his foster-father in a state of unusual agitation.

"Are you ill, sir?" he asked in alarm.

Winters paused and looked at the intruder fixedly.

"Harry," said he bluntly, in a voice dry and rasping, "have you asked Helen to marry you?"

With no preliminary word to soften or explain, Harry was caught wholly unawares. An unhappy foreboding seized him, for something told him that he was dealing no longer with an ally but an opponent. But his voice was calm and his manner frank as he answered:

"Why, yes. And I've been accepted. That's what I've come to tell you."

Winters listened in a daze. He started to speak, but his feelings overcame him, and he sank into a chair and buried his face in his hands.

Perplexed, wholly at a loss to account for the unlooked-for reception of his announcement, Harry stared at his foster-father helplessly. That there had been a mistake—a grave and ghastly one—was all too evident, but its nature he could not conjecture. Had not Winters himself urged him to marry?

"But, sir," he finally found the voice to say, "didn't you give me your consent? Didn't you say, 'Go in and win'?"

Winters gave a half-sob, half-groan.

"I didn't know," he muttered. "I didn't understand. . . . I—I thought it was Ethel you meant."

"Ethel?" wonderingly. "Why, she was—" He paused as the truth began to dawn. "And you didn't know I loved Helen?"

Winters shook his head.

"I didn't, my boy," he disclaimed brokenly. He raised his haggard face and looked pityingly at the youth before him. "Harry, I've done you a terrible wrong. I should have known—should have seen. But I was blind. My God! I wouldn't have had this happen for the world!" He nerved him-

self for the task before him. "You must give up all thought of marrying Helen."

Though partially prepared for the verdict, Harry winced as if he had been dealt a blow. Unflinchingly he returned the other's glance, but he felt his spirit fast forsaking him.

"Then you—you don't think I've a right to marry?" he faltered. "I'm not like any other American, after all?"

Winters looked at him in abject misery, but said nothing.

"Then you lied to me!" burst out Harry. "Do you hear—you lied!" As a realization of what he was saying came to him, he checked himself, ashamed. "I—I beg your pardon, sir," he apologized. "I had no right to speak so."

"I know—I understand, my boy," was Winters's tremulous answer. "Yes," fiercely. "I did lie—you're right—I did! But I didn't know it was a lie, Harry," he pleaded. "I wanted you to be happy, my boy. And I didn't know what the problem meant till it came to my own door."

The lips of the younger man were firmly compressed, and he shook his head slowly as if in answer to thoughts within.

Winters watched him anxiously.

"But you will give her up?" he pleaded. "Won't you, my boy, won't you?"

A sound in the doorway caused them both to turn, and there stood Helen.

"Father's wrong!" she cried spirit-edly. "He's wrong!"

Proudly she crossed to Harry's side and placed her hand trustingly on his arm.

"Shall we sacrifice our happiness because of an unreasonable prejudice? Shall we let foolish pride count in a matter as vital as this?"

She looked defiantly at Winters, but his careworn expression touched her, and her face softened. Impulsively she went to him and placed her arms about his neck.

"You wouldn't really part us, would you, daddy? . . . Would you?"

He looked into her eyes in silent misery, but said nothing.

"For it would be wicked—*wicked!*" she burst out impetuously. "Don't you know it—don't you *know* it!" She buried her face in his shoulder, sobbing bitterly.

Before he could reply Harry was heard from.

"Little woman, he's right!" he said.

His voice trembled, and the words came in a jerky, husky gulp. Pale and heartsick he stood before them, delivering the verdict reached after a struggle with self. In vain he strove to be calm; the effort was useless, and excitedly he paced the floor, speaking in a strained, unnatural voice.

"What right have I to think of marrying? I—a half-caste—a part savage! What right have I to ask the girl I love—and God knows I do, little woman—to share my shame! For it is shame; it can't be denied. Isn't it shameful to have had no father? Isn't it worse to have had a Chinese mother? Isn't it? . . . And God help me," with a bitter laugh, "I actually thought I could marry you!"

Helen tried to speak, but he checked her, and continued:

"I should have known, little woman. I should have seen that I had no right. It was like asking you to help perpetuate the wrong and shame!"

"Do you think my love so pitifully weak that it couldn't survive obstacles?" she asked reproachfully. "And imaginary obstacles at that?"

"There shouldn't be any of *any* kind," he replied. "And they're not imaginary, dear."

"They are silly, foolish little obstacles," she persisted.

He shook his head sorrowfully, smiling grimly as he realized that he now was prosecuting the case against himself.

"They are great big hopeless ones," he declared. "Could I have you pointed out as the wife of a half-caste? Don't you see what it would mean to you—the endless embarrassment and humiliation?"

"I'm sure it wouldn't."

"But it would," gently.

"And then," eagerly, "people need never know about you!"

"People have a way of knowing," with a sad smile. "Didn't the boys at school and college? Haven't people everywhere? It can't be hidden. And would you wish a husband who had something to conceal from the world? One of whom the least said the better? Of course you wouldn't! . . . And then," straightforwardly, "there might be others whose chances for happiness we should have to consider."

But still she persisted. All arguments were exhausted but one—the supreme one—and she gave it confidently:

"I love you, Harry."

There was a note of genuine agony in his reply.

"And I love you, little woman—far too much, dearie, to spoil your life. For it would be spoiled, sweetheart, beyond a shadow of a doubt. . . . Little woman, sha'n't we face the situation squarely? Isn't it best to keep on being simply brother and sister?"

Helen's lips quivered and she bowed her head, while Winters rose unsteadily and grasped the speaker's hand.

"Thank you—thank you!" was all he could say.

Mechanically Harry pressed the hand in his, and his eyes filled with tears.

"It's the only course," he declared brokenly. "I mustn't—I have no right." The effort was too much, and he broke down. "If you don't mind, I—I think I'll say good night," he faltered. Wistfully he turned to Helen. "Good-night, little woman," said he.

Impulsively she threw herself in his arms.

"I can't—I can't give you up!" she sobbed.

Gently he sought to calm her, while Winters looked on in helpless pity.

"It's best, dearie. Won't you believe it's best?" He drew her into the hall to say good night. "Won't you tell me I've done right—that you think

I have?" he faltered, as he looked at her longingly.

She smiled bravely through her tears. "I'm sure of it, Harry," she whispered. "And—and I'm proud of you, dear."

XV

For a long time that night Winters sat huddled in an arm-chair, tortured by thoughts of the sorrow he had caused the two he loved.

"But what else could I do?" he asked himself repeatedly. "What could I?" But the conviction that he had acted for the best brought little solace.

The longer he pondered, however, the more convinced he became that marriage for Harry under any circumstances was inadvisable. All manner of valid objections—ranging from the risk of petty annoyance to the potent menace of heredity—presented themselves, and with amazement he realized how blindly obstinate his own attitude had been. But what to do to soften the sting of disappointment? That was the problem now!

The thought of Harry returning to the cheerless surroundings of the West made Winters keenly apprehensive. Helen's position, at home and among friends, would be less trying, but with Harry opportunities for brooding would be numerous. Suddenly a happy thought struck him—the business mission to Hongkong that he himself had decided not to undertake! Why not offer it to Harry? The journey would afford precisely the sort of respite needed for mental readjustment. At midnight Winters retired convinced that his idea was an excellent one.

Harry and Helen were both at breakfast the following morning, and both strove to refute the testimony of tired eyes by appearing cheerful and unconcerned. It was evident that they wished to convey the impression that the evening's decision was accepted as final—an understanding definitely reached in a frank, quiet talk later in the day.

That evening Winters presented his proposition to Harry, and much to his satisfaction the offer was accepted. Without apparent heed to his interests in Colorado, the boy expressed prompt willingness to undertake the mission.

Thus it happened, a fortnight later, that instead of being deep in smelting experiments in the dreary town of Hopeful, Harry Winters was a passenger on the *S. S. China*, bidding farewell to the port of Honolulu. On shore, a half-mile distant, a native band was playing, while a conglomerate crowd of flower-venders, hackmen, tourists and loungers thronged the pier. On shipboard the passengers—bedecked with parti-colored *lais*—gathered about the rail for a farewell glimpse of the gay little land, chatting and laughing with the unaffected familiarity which seven days at sea had engendered.

It was apparent that Harry in his isolated deck-chair preferred his solitude and his cigarette to the lively groups amidships. He leaned forward gloomily, puffing meditatively and gazing at the expanse of dark green water which the vessel's prow was churning into creamy foam. Despondent and heartsore, he found his mind dwelling with disquieting persistency on the subject he had sailed away to forget.

There had been something morbid in the half-caste's ready assent to return to Hongkong; to revisit the environment whose influence he had been unable to overcome appealed to him oddly when first suggested, and willingness quickly grew into active desire. If, he reasoned, his title to a white man's estate contained a flaw, it might be well no longer to aspire to that distinction. Better, perhaps, to experiment with the untried side of his dual nature—the side he hitherto had striven to efface. Perhaps a permanent home in the Orient might be best for him, after all. With a half-formed determination to remain away forever he set sail for the Far East, in his more depressed moments going to the extreme of thinking that he might even adopt Chinese attire and live in the

Eurasian quarter—an expedient whose absurdity he recognized in his calmer moods.

From San Francisco to the China Sea he nursed the bitterest thoughts, and each day depression seemed to grow more marked. He was disgusted with life—with everything. What did it profit him, he asked, to make a comfortable living, with a fortune as a possibility, if to mar its enjoyment there always would be the consciousness of a difference between himself and his associates—a vital difference that marked him as a man apart, unfit?

On a humid morning, a month after the *China's* departure from San Francisco, a cannon boomed to announce to all Hongkong that a mailship was entering the harbor. Two hours later the *China* reached her buoy, about which a dozen little launches darted impertinently in and out, jockeying for place, in order to be first alongside when the gangplank was lowered. Larger launches, some flying hotel pennants, others packed with gesticulating Chinamen come to welcome friends in the steerage, pushed in among the smaller craft; while junks and sampans—the former seeking freight, the latter passengers—tempted Providence by utilizing all spaces intervening. Almost as soon as the huge anchor was dropped an important little boat went puffing away for the shore, laden to the gunwales with the month-old letters and papers for which a number of colonial residents were waiting with impatience.

On the *China's* deck all was hubbub and confusion. In a spirit of half-amused helplessness Harry surrendered his luggage to a cockney hotel-runner, and selected a place near the rail from which to view the restless scene about him. In his analytical frame of mind he wondered why he felt no elation at seeing his native land again, but rather a sense of disgust and self-pity. But soon the ceaseless movement and uproar stirred his interest and diverted his attention.

A sudden impulse seized him to go ashore in a sampan, instead of waiting for the hotel launch to complete its

load of trunks and passengers, and he decided to follow it. A moment later he was descending one of the smaller gangways near the stern.

"Sampan-ah!" he called.

Immediately a dozen "Hai yahs!" rose from as many small craft clustered about the step, while brown arms not otherwise employed were waved frantically in the hope of attracting attention. A number of pointed bows were bobbing up and down invitingly when he reached the bottom, and into one he stepped with instructions to "go shore-side."

Seated in the stuffy little cabin—passenger space by day, living-room by night—Harry surveyed the sampan household with peculiar fascination. With mixed emotions he recalled that a boat of this description had been his birthplace: in surroundings similarly squalid he had spent his first few weeks of babyhood. The old woman at the sweep, the sleepy man at the sail, the dull-looking woman and girls at the oars, and the unwashed babies on deck typified the family of which he once had been a member.

The untidy children played with the black-tongued chow dog; the old hag mumbled to herself as she held the sweep and stirred the rice; the three at the oars toiled perspiringly; and the father drowsily smoked his bamboo pipe.

"Aren't they happier than I?" was Harry's thought. "Wouldn't I have been better off if left alone?"

He was surprised to find how readily he understood their guttural conversation; twelve years in America had not robbed him of his knowledge of the language.

At Blake Pier he paid his fare, and made his way through a swarm of rickshaws to the hotel, a few steps distant. Determined to shake off his wretched mood, he went in to tiffin as soon as he had registered and secured a room, knowing that his luggage would not arrive for an hour or more. The long dining-hall looked precisely as it had when as a boy he had gone there occasionally with Winters—its

tinted pillars supporting a high ceiling and its glass front affording a view of the craft-thronged harbor. Chinese boys in neat gowns of blue moved noiselessly about—each dish on the menu from soup to condiments being numbered to simplify the task of ordering—while the swaying punkahs supplied a grateful breeze.

Despite good intentions, gloomy thoughts continued to demand consideration. So far as plans went, Harry had none; he would first dispose of the errand that had brought him, and then consider the future. His foster-father's mission was a simple one, involving merely the transfer of papers and the exercise of power of attorney, and the whole transaction was not likely to require more than a day at most. Tiffin over, he decided to look up the solicitor, Mr. Thomson, without delay, and get the matter off his hands.

His reception by that phlegmatic gentleman of the law, who chanced to be located but a few doors distant, did not tend to lessen melancholy; on the contrary, his perfunctory, matter-of-fact greeting was distinctly depressing. Happily, an hour sufficed to complete the business, and Harry returned to the hotel to renew his protests against Fate at his leisure.

Two coolies with his luggage were in his room awaiting his arrival—surly specimens, who accepted his "kum-sha" without thanks, and took their departure, not even pausing to reply when he addressed a few words to them in Chinese. Outside the door, however, one of them dropped a sneering remark that reached Harry's ear, and brought him to his feet, livid with rage.

"*Seb yap tim!*" laughed the coolie.

In an instant Harry was fairly beside himself; angrily he paced the floor, clenching his fists and muttering savagely.

"*Seb yap tim*—that's what I am—a damned half-caste!" he cried. "You're right—you're right! My God, even the coolies despise me! For I'm tainted—accursed—and they know it! . . . But why should I be blamed for my beast of a father—for my poor, igno-

rant mother? Why should I be branded? . . . *Seb yap tim!*—it's a pretty name—a fine heritage!"

A prey to overpowering emotions, he seized his hat and rushed to the street, not knowing whither he was going, nor caring, but craving for the open air, where he might move and breathe and think. At the curb he leaped into the nearest rickshaw and savagely bade the coolie start. The frightened runner, not daring to ask more specific instructions, started off at random at breakneck speed, down Queen's Road and along the water-front for a mile or more, then back again by another route. At a more leisurely pace he trotted up the main thoroughfare, back past the hotel, thence on to the heart of the business district. His wrath somewhat abated, Harry began to take note of things about him, and he smiled as he recognized the well-remembered clothing-store of Tak Cheong, the haberdashery of Yee Sang Fat, and the jewelry shops of Wong Hing and Chu Hang On.

Further on, snatches of song and shouts of laughter came through the open doors of sailors' boarding-houses and grogeries, chaste resorts bearing such highly-colored titles as The Land We Live In Hotel and the Paris, New York and London Café. Still on, the rickshaw spun, till at last the native section was reached—the district of sing-song restaurants and six-day theatres, of gaudy bazaars, ill-smelling markets, and a thousand alien sounds and odors. Coolies, stripped to the waist, staggered by under enormous burdens; peddlers, laden to their shoulders' capacities, shouted their wares in strange falsetto keys. Barbers and dentists plied their trade on the open curb, while a throng of shouting, haggling men, women and children supplied a din such as none but a Chinese city could offer as a continuous feature.

A blockade of chairs and rickshaws soon forced a halt, and the panting coolie drew up at a curb and proceeded to mop his face and shoulders. Harry looked admiringly at the swarthy

arms and thighs which a five-mile sprint had failed to tire, but for some reason his well-meant gaze was rewarded by a surly look which, rightly or wrongly, was received as a sign of contempt. Instantly the bitter mood returned.

"And now it's a rickshaw coolie! Looked down upon by a mere pack-horse! What next!"

In the midst of these wretched thoughts, he chanced to notice through the passing throng on the sidewalk a strange little object huddled against a doorway a few yards distant. At first it was hard to tell whether the creature was human, so deformed was the body, so horribly distorted the features; but careful scrutiny showed it to be a dwarf, a cripple of the most repulsive type—probably a Eurasian! Its stringy queue—a stumpy, knotted growth—served as the pigmy's one pathetic symbol of nationality; in the misshapen features there was nothing to corroborate the claim.

"Miserable little wretch!" muttered Harry.

He gazed pityingly at the helpless, twisted creature whose one apparent aim in life was to keep from the heels of the passers-by. Impulse led him to alight to view at closer range this other half-caste—this *seb yap tim* whose lot was so infinitely worse than his own—and he alighted and pushed his way across the walk. But on reaching the doorway he drew back in surprise; instead of groveling in the dust, the little man was plying a trade—rolling cigarettes on a narrow board and humming a blithe accompaniment!

So unlooked-for was the discovery that Harry stood a moment spellbound, lost in amazement. The misshapen mite glanced up and grinned on discovering his audience of one, then unconcernedly resumed his labor and his song. Harry continued to gaze in silence—pondering—wondering. Here was an object-lesson; here a defiance to Fate!

Once again the cigarette-maker paused, this time to give a cordial

leer of acknowledgment as a silver coin dropped into his tattered lap; but work promptly claimed him again. His monotonous ditty—an unintelligible "*ki-ya, hoo-ya, kee-ya,*" repeated over and over again in a queer little squeaky voice—seemed to furnish inspiration for the active fingers, and higher and higher grew the pile of finished wares.

Deep in thought, Harry returned to his rickshaw. "Go hotel-side!" he told the coolie.

"And I thought my lot hard!" he mused, as he was whisked away. "I thought I deserved pity! And here's this wretched little twisted freak plugging cheerfully away, while I—" He stopped, ashamed. *He* had work to do, but was he doing it? Was he defying Fate? Or was he wasting his time bemoaning it, when he might be up and achieving!

His Colorado workshop sheltering the model of his smelting device—*his* device, whose completion would be a step in the direction of recognition and prestige—loomed up before his mental eye, and set his blood tingling. He recalled other plans, the product of long days and restless nights—plans which waited for him alone to bring to material shape. His workshop called—he was needed! Every shouting peddler, every busy merchant, every sweating coolie along the moving thoroughfare sang the same cheering song of Work. Of all mankind, he alone was idle!

Reaching the hotel, he hastened to the desk to inquire about steamship departures. Yes, a San Francisco liner would sail that evening, the last launch leaving the pier at six. In an instant his plan was formed: he was going home! Not a day, not a minute, would he lose—his time for moping was past!

Within an hour he was on shipboard, ready for the homeward journey. The very exertion of hurried arrangements was exhilarating; his heart beat quickly, gladly; he was happy!

For though one road to contentment had been denied him, another had been found.

XVI

Of all commodities, Time is unique in that its dimensions vary according to the end from which measurement is made. A yard of cloth—provided the salesman be honest—remains a yard whether the tape-line be laid from left to right, or *vice versa*. But a period of time is one thing measured into the past, and quite another reckoned into the future.

Harry Winters's retrospective view of the two years that followed his return from the Orient would have been hard to reconcile with an estimate of the same period made on the day he set sail for the Far East. Time had passed with astonishing speed. Resolutely he had set to work, tossing despondency into limbo, and results were soon in evidence. His days were busy and his evenings filled, and his nights were short and restful, while interest in work grew more pronounced as each task accomplished brought fresh problems for solution.

Workshop and owner and the town of Hopeful itself developed simultaneously. Persistently the village trespassed beyond the limits which its founders had established; while the business of Henry Winters, Mining Engineer, was acquiring new quarters and reveling in the companionship of a house and stable on the lot adjoining.

Harry was proud of his property. It was pleasant to survey his compact little plant and reflect that he owed no man for its beginning or its development. It was equally agreeable to cast an eye of possession on his red-roofed stable, joint-residence of old Oliver Starr and two trim little horses for whose speed Oliver stood unblushing sponsor. But proudest of all was Harry of his diminutive cottage—a tabloid home that pleased the eye and furnished untold comfort. In front was a cozy library supplied with well-packed shelves, and adjoining it a dining-room, complete if somewhat limited in size; while the rear of the cottage formed the bailiwick of Miss Maggie O'Connell—cook, housemaid

and generalissima of the premises. Precedence over all took Maggie by the divine right of self-assertion.

"But if you could bask in the radiance of Maggie's dumplings," wrote Harry, "you would feel that submission to tyranny would be the least you could offer in return."

Maggie's training-school had been a "Harvey eating-house" on the Santa Fé, and the rigor of frontier apprenticeship was reflected in her honest face. Oliver Starr, on the other hand, was a traveler and cosmopolite. An Englishman by birth, he had dwelt for a time at least in nearly every country but his own, serving as fancy dictated as sailor, miner, ranchman and coachman, and accepting what the gods had to offer without thanks as without complaint. Rarely did he unbend sufficiently to view life with aught but sullen indifference, and then only with the aid of much bad whisky. But he was fond of the horses and faithful to his employer, qualities that made his occasional lapses easy to condone.

With a home and an income and the devotion of Maggie and Oliver, Harry fared far better than the vast majority of bachelors; and, knowing it, was grateful. Nor did he fail to experience gratitude for blessings other than these comfortably material ones; he had tasted the joy of achievement, and his appetite was whetted for more. Though life denied him much, it was offering much in compensation.

On a mild September morning the owner of the premises was waiting for breakfast, of which savory suggestions were wafting in from the kitchen; but something more important was imminent—nothing less than a visit from Winters.

Letters from the East had contained frequent hints of a trip to Colorado, but not until recently had plans developed to the point of actual preparation. But now Winters was on his way, and—barring those disquieting contingencies termed Acts of Providence—would arrive in Hopeful that noon. Of Helen's intentions he had written nothing—a fact leading to a sanguine sus-

picion that a "surprise" was in store, the hope being flavored, however, with a drop of distrust as to the wisdom of renewed propinquity. Not since the day of his departure for Hongkong had Harry visited home.

Pre-prandial reflection was interrupted by Maggie's arrival with a plate of cakes.

"An' a letter, sor," was her announcement, after placing her fragrant burden before him. "Ate the cakes first!"

"Of course, if you insist, Maggie," he smiled. But the moment she departed he ruthlessly abandoned breakfast and eagerly opened the envelope.

As reading progressed, however, the look of pleased expectancy first in evidence gave way to unmistakable disappointment. The letter ran:

At first I thought of accompanying father, but after thinking it all over decided, dear, it would not be best. Do you wonder I am a bit upset tonight? . . . And when I'm blue like this, and out of sorts, I wonder, Harry, if we did do right, after all? I know it's foolish and unreasonable of me, but you understand—don't you? Into your blessed old ears I can pour my woes without risk of a cynical smile. . . . How quickly these two years have gone, and yet, have they been happy? People call me a fortunate girl, and I suppose I am. But do you think I am contented, dear? Do you seriously in your heart believe that I ever again will truly and honestly feel the happiness of two years ago—when you were Boy—when I was Little Woman? Don't you *know* I can't? For there's only a precious memory, a bitter-sweet what-might-have-been—that's all. . . . How staid and matter-of-fact our letters have been—I telling stupidly of the doings of my little world, you writing so loyally and modestly of the big achievements in yours—the achievements of which I've been so proud! But sometimes, Harry—tonight is one of those sometimes—I wonder if you, too, have something hidden behind the reserve we both have maintained—the reserve I've broken only once or twice when, as tonight, my feelings seem bent upon showing what a weak, selfish girl I really am. And I wonder, dear, now that it's all in the past, whether you, too, sometimes ask if it mightn't have been different—if Conscience was trustworthy, after all. For—

Harry glanced up nervously, then abruptly bowed his head and wept as if his heart would break!

Several minutes later, shamefaced and not a little perplexed, he pulled

himself together and gave an apprehensive glance in the direction of the kitchen, sternly enjoining himself to brace up.

"Of all absurd performances!" he muttered wonderingly.

The letter was rescued from the floor, and its perusal continued; but what followed seemed mainly an attempt to atone for the impulsive passage that had preceded.

I can well imagine how jubilant you are over the prospect of seeing father. The dear left last evening, as excited as if he never had been west of the Hudson, and, as he stops but a day in Chicago, should be with you almost as soon as this cheery epistle. Bob and Ethel and Little Bob (it's been given a name at last!) are to spend a day or two with me before I hie me to Mt. Washington for a fortnight. They're due this evening—in fact, within an hour. I wonder if their coming could have helped along this wretched mood of mine—somehow, the thought that they've both found all that they hoped for—but there, I must behave! Prudence, therefore, bids me drop you a polite curtsy, and make myself beautiful for my guests' reception. Hug daddy for me, and divide with strict impartiality the love of

Your affectionate sister,

HELEN WINTERS.

As Harry tucked the letter away, a smile of tenderness played on his lips—lips whose firmness lent their owner's face its look of strong maturity. But further meditation was nipped by Maggie's reappearance.

"Phwat's the mather wid th' cakes?" she demanded in surprise.

"Why, I'm eating them," guiltily.

"Ye are, are ye!" tartly. "Ye've scarce pecked at y'r plate. Ate these!" She laid a fresh delegation from the griddle before him, and stood guard to see that he did his full duty.

"Oliver's at it again," she remarked by way of pleasant conversation.

"*What?*" Harry laid down his fork in disgust. "Are you sure?" he demanded.

"Can't I shmeel wid me nose?" was her pertinent query.

"Confound it! I wish he'd select a date that wouldn't interfere with my plans! Just when I particularly needed him!"

With temper awry, Harry finished

breakfast, and strode to the stable to verify the news; but to his surprise and relief Oliver was working away as usual, apparently quite normal.

"Maggie's nose isn't infallible, after all," he concluded. With an injunction to the old fellow to be at the station at noon—explaining that he himself would walk down—he went to the office with humor restored. A business appointment took him downtown early in the forenoon, but he reached the station a few moments before twelve and found Oliver and the carriage waiting at the platform.

Harry's next five minutes were filled with pleasurable anticipation. At last he was to welcome to a home of his own the man who had been his friend and patron and father, and the thought was responsible for a proud little thrill. In thundered the train, on time to the second, and out among the first of the passengers to alight stepped Winters—white-haired and ruddy, as active and alert as any youth of twenty. His "Well, well, it's fine to see you, my boy!" had the old familiar ring, his handclasp its accustomed warmth; and more than one lounge along the platform smiled unconscious approval as the two men met in unaffected embrace.

Talking and laughing and stoutly refusing to surrender his suit-case, Winters followed to the carriage and briskly took a seat beside his host. No glance around gave Oliver; he might not be from New York, but he knew the etiquette of his position. Off they started, Winters's eyes dancing with enthusiasm.

"It's fine—fine!" was his repeated assertion—which sounded pleasantly familiar. A running fire of queries enlivened the journey.

"So this is the town you're making famous! Bless my soul, a full-grown metropolis!"

"And only five years old!" proudly.

"Marvelous! And that's the court-house!"

"It happens to be the jail, but that's first cousin to a court-house, isn't it? But far more important—there is my

own house-and-lot, up there at the turn in the street."

"The brick one? My boy, it's a veritable mansion!"

"I'm afraid you're looking at the workshop," laughed Harry. "The palace proper is just this side."

"Whichever it is, it's fine!" was the reckless assertion. "I never dreamt—look out, there! Heavens, what's the matter?"

The horses had swerved sharply to the right, and an upset was narrowly averted.

"What—what is it?" gasped Winters.

Harry needed but a single glance at Oliver to comprehend the situation. The old man's form had collapsed into an unsteady heap, and the reins were slipping from his fingers—evidently Maggie's nose was right! To climb forward and seize the lines was but the work of a second, and the perplexed horses were quickly brought under control.

"Now we're all right," announced Harry reassuringly.

"But your man," in alarm; "what ails him?"

"Plain, undecorated drunk," was the laconic answer.

"Oh," relieved. "I thought it was heart failure."

"No, indeed. He'll recover."

By this time Oliver had relapsed into peaceful slumber, a condition which he was enjoying to the utmost when the carriage drew up at Harry's door. His head was drooping, and his breathing melodious, while matters mundane were no longer an interest.

"Do you mind stepping into the house?" suggested Harry. "There's Maggie in the doorway now! I'll be with you in half a minute."

Winters alighted and walked briskly up the steps to the entrance, where Maggie—at last in full grasp of the situation—was freeing her mind in a manner altogether forceful.

"Dhrunk, is he!" was her indignant greeting to the guest. "The thirsty baste! Didn't I say so three hours back?"

"Did you?" asked Winters amiably. "Well, your judgment seems fairly well vindicated."

"Th' dhrunkard! Th' white-bearded ould—but it's axin' y'r pardon I am, sor! Sit down, sor, plaze sit down. The toper! Th' ould divill! An' gimme y'r bag, sor! The monkey-faced spalpeen!"

With expressions somewhat mixed, but intentions of the best, Maggie relieved the visitor of his suit-case, continuing the righteous ventilation of her views until Harry arrived from the stable to report the horses unhitched and Oliver in bed.

"It was no merry pastime to get him to his loft, either," he declared. "But a few hours' rest will put him in fine fettle for another month of white-ribbonhood."

"Of the periodical variety?" asked Winters knowingly.

"Precisely—sober for weeks, then helpless for a day or so. And when it happens at such a time as this," warmly, "it's a decided nuisance."

"Never mind," consolingly. "So long as our necks are intact! . . . Is he a satisfactory man otherwise?"

"Excellent. He couldn't lavish more care on the horses if they were automobiles!"

"That's compensation for much. So long as——"

"Y'r room's ready, sor," remarked Maggie. "An' divel a bit of luncheon do ye get unless I get ye settled and meself back t' wurruk!"

Winters laughingly followed Maggie and his suit-case up the stairway, while Harry brought up the rear.

"And how soon do we get luncheon?" inquired the master of the house timidly.

"Whin it's good an' ready," was the gentle rejoinder. "An' that," with a smile of considerable breadth, "will take twinty minutes." Then to Winters: "Make yerself to home, sor. Raymimber ye're wan of th' fam'ly."

"But don't flatter yourself you can be late to table on that account!" warned Harry. "Maggie is extremely particular."

"I'm not, sor!" interposed Maggie indignantly. "If you don't raych lunch till dinner 'twill make no difference, sor." Amenities thus attended to, she departed for the kitchen.

At one o'clock the three reassembled in the dining-room, and there for an hour Winters beamed across a snowy tablecloth, talking much and paying enthusiastic homage to the fillet of beef and potatoes *au gratin*, whose author hovered proudly near.

"You've won the lady's devotion for all time," confided Harry in a discreet undertone. "And that's no small achievement."

"This has been delicious!" declared Winters. "And now," he announced as they rose, "I'm due for a nap. The same old decrepitude," with a twinkle. "I don't suppose I'll ever get the East entirely out of my system."

"I shouldn't try."

"My boy," confessed Winters, "I wouldn't part with my patiently acquired weaknesses for all the bonds in Wall street."

"If I had been truly considerate," with a smile, "I should have had your room equipped with a punkah."

"Unquestionably—and a Dutch-wife, too! You remember the cooling-belsters we used during the hot seasons, don't you? Not a month ago," with a chuckle, "I forfeited Helen's esteem by making an innocent reference to the device at one of her dinner-parties."

Arm in arm, they sauntered to the library.

"And now, while you're sampling our Colorado siestas," said Harry, "I'll leave you. Remember Maggie has admitted you to the household as a member in full standing. There are cigars in the box and other things on the sideboard. Maggie'll get you ice. If there's anything else you wish, shout vigorously."

"No fear. *My sa-be!*" was Winters's response.

Harry departed to mingle work with pleasant retrospect, while his guest retired, shortly after, with a magazine, a

good cigar, a cooling drink and a smile of satisfaction.

Dinner that evening afforded a second demonstration of Maggie's creative powers, and left two men in a state of beaming contentment. In the library, with coffee and liqueurs, they proceeded to chat and smoke and enjoy to the utmost the stanch satisfaction that comes of male companionship. With asperity did Winters resent a lament that choice theatrical attractions were not among Hopeful's varied resources.

"Theatres!" promptly. "I came West to avoid them. Helen enjoys a play almost as much as a bargain-sale; so I'm frequently pressed into service. Otherwise, two dramas and an opera a season would suit me very nicely."

"Out here," sighed Harry, "the agonies of a ten-cent opera company would be welcome. It's pathetic!"

"Same old story; what one has one doesn't appreciate. And what one is deprived of"—Winters paused uncomfortably, as if an unintended construction had occurred to him—"one seems to want all the more."

A shadow passed over Harry's face, and his foster-father, noticing it, eyed him curiously.

"Do you know, my boy," he ventured, after an awkward pause, "there are several things we've yet to talk over?"

"I think more than likely," with a nervous laugh. "But what in particular?"

Instead of answering Winters selected a fresh cigar and lighted it with extreme deliberation. Then, after an experimental puff or two, he asked abruptly:

"When are you coming East again?"

"Why—er—some time, I hope," replied Harry evasively.

"But will you?"

"To be sure," still less at ease. "Why not?"

Winters shook his head sadly. "You know why not, my boy," he answered. "And it's too bad, too bad."

It was interesting to read Harry's face as he wavered between desire to

avoid an uncomfortable discussion and his natural inclination to be frank. There was something distinctly likable about the way he squared his shoulders and asked candidly:

"Do you really believe, sir, it would have been better if I hadn't stayed away as I have—better, I mean, either for Helen or for me? Don't you think it's the wisest course until—well, until we've had something of a chance to forget?"

"But when will that be?" dubiously.

"It's hard to tell," he was forced to admit.

Again they lapsed into silence, and again it was Winters who broke it.

"My boy," he ventured, "suppose we talk it all over—from the beginning. Shall we?"

There was a kindly smile on his lips and an eager little gleam in his eye, but his suggestion did not appear to arouse enthusiasm.

"What would be the use, sir?" Harry objected. "Isn't it far better to forget the whole unpleasant episode?"

But Winters was determined.

"Come, come, my boy, a frank discussion is always a good thing. It isn't that I wish to open old wounds, but seriously, I should like to review the case—to set myself right, if I may put it that way."

"But bless you, there's nothing to set right! Surely one couldn't question the correctness of your position in the matter."

"Nevertheless," obstinately, "I want to have my little say. May I?"

Harry nodded, and Winters, with a satisfied smile, settled back as if prepared to give a lengthy dissertation.

"For a good many years," he began deliberately, "I looked forward to the time when you would marry. I wanted it—hoped for it. The notion became almost a hobby. For you meant a good deal to me, my boy. I banked pretty heavily on that queer little red-head of yours."

Winters's smile grew reminiscent, and the tender look in his gray-thatched eyes became softer still.

"As I was saying," he went on abruptly, "I wanted you to have a wife when the right time came. I knew what marriage could mean to a man—God knows I had reason to! And so, when finally I thought I saw your ideas turning in the same direction, I was pleased, and did all in my power to encourage you. . . . And then——"

Harry stirred uneasily, but Winters after a moment's hesitation continued unflinchingly:

"Then, when I learned that it was Helen you loved, my views, as you know, underwent a most remarkable change. I found myself revolting at the very idea I had been nursing all these years. And I was convinced—without quite knowing why—that I had been wrong from the start—that your marriage to an American woman would be possible."

"Well, you were right," dispassionately. "So it would."

"But was I right?"

As sharp as a sentry's challenge came the query, and another more explicit followed: "Were my objections vital, after all?"

"To be sure, they were!" a bit impatiently. "How could you doubt it?"

"But were they?"

"Beyond the shadow of a doubt."

"Let us see."

In his earnestness Winters left his comfortable chair and began to pace the few feet of floor space with the air of an attorney examining a witness.

"Have subsequent events shown that my opposition was based on sound considerations?"

"Subsequent events? I don't understand. You forget," with a faint smile, "I haven't married."

"But aside from that," with an impatient gesture, "has your Chinese blood been an actual, or an imaginary, handicap? That's what I want to know. Has it hampered your inventions, influenced your work, retarded your royalties, or affected your relations with other business men?"

"No, I don't suppose so."

"Well, then," triumphantly, "has it been a barrier in other respects?"

Harry pondered a moment. "I most decidedly think it has," he answered.

"How?" a bit dismayed.

"In numerous ways. Why, it has been a source of constant embarrassment—always."

"Fiddlesticks! Supersensitiveness—nothing more."

Winters paused a minute, thrust his hands meditatively into his pockets, then resumed his limited excursions along the carpet. As for Harry, his heart was beating an uncontrollable rat-tat-tat which his calm exterior wholly belied.

"We'll not discuss that phase now," was Winters's dictum, after another nervous turn. "It has no bearing on the main issue. The principal point is this, Harry—and I wish to make myself quite clear: In my opposition to your marriage I was wrong—utterly, unqualifiedly wrong! I magnified petty mole-hills into ridiculous mountains. I focused my attention on non-essentials—atavistic bogies, and the like—while the one important issue was crying for recognition. I calmly thrust aside the greatest consideration in the whole blooming world—the pure love of a man and a woman. I disregarded the real happiness of my daughter, and your happiness, my boy. And the utter absurdity of my position never once occurred to me until I began to view the consequences! But when, day after day, I saw a plucky little girl striving to hide an unhappiness that refused to be concealed, I began to question the stand I had taken, and slowly I came to my senses. It's taken a long time, my boy, but at last I know my error. And now"—with touching simplicity—"I've come to tell you."

Harry listened intently, betraying no sign of emotion beyond a heightened color when reference to Helen's attitude was made; and his firm grip on self was shown in the quiet way in which he made reply:

"Granting all that you say—for

argument's sake—what would you have me do? "

"Do!" exploded Winters. "Do!" Why, come East with me, to be sure, and marry Helen! What do you suppose?"

"Do you mean," with an incredulous smile, "that she actually has authorized you to——?"

"Heaven forbid!" quickly. "I can picture her dismay if she suspected me in the rôle of Cupid! But what has that to do with it? She loves you, doesn't she? Of course she does—I know it! And you love her—I'm equally positive of that. Well, then, you'd marry her if you could, wouldn't you?"

To Winters's amazement Harry slowly shook his head. "I couldn't even think of it," he declared.

"What!"

"I mean it," tremulously; "I couldn't. You're right, I still love Helen—love her more than anything else in this world. I'd rather marry her than see every other ambition gratified. But I can't," with a choke. "I never can. And I mustn't give it a thought!"

Disappointed and chagrined, Winters seated himself.

"But you're wrong, my boy," he faltered.

"I'm not," spiritedly. "It's you, sir. Your sympathy and love have made you blind to the real situation. You're seeking a solution for a problem that has none."

"Rubbish!"

"It isn't, sir. It's fact. Don't you suppose I've thought it out, time and again? Don't you think I've viewed it from every angle—given it every twist that hoping against hope could suggest? But the conclusion has always been the same—that no amount of love could warrant my marriage."

"But explain," doggedly.

"I'm trying to. In a business way, as I've said, my status hasn't been particularly affected—there's no reason why it should. But in other respects I've felt the stigma time and again. Do you realize what it is to have a taint—an ineradicable something that

makes you different from those around you? Do you realize what it is to be looked down upon by a mental inferior. That's my position, sir, repeatedly."

"But it's only the narrow prejudice of a few ignoramuses."

"The prejudice is less narrow than you think," bitterly, "and ten times deeper! There's scarcely an American who hasn't it in some degree—even in this forsaken hole! How people learn about me, heaven only knows, but they do—it's been the same wherever I have gone. Rumor follows, and the sewing circles do the rest! . . . Do you suppose I could ask a woman to share my humiliation? Do you think a woman of fine sensibilities could endure it?"

"But you exaggerate," the other said a bit weakly. "You're over sensitive, as I've said before."

"That may be. Perhaps unpleasant experiences have made me so. But there's another point, sir—something else that bars me absolutely—beyond all shadow of doubt. You spoke of 'atavistic bogies.' But atavism isn't a bogey, sir—it's a hard, undodgable fact. A little study of the subject readily convinces one. Why, there have been instances of reversion by the hundred. There have been well-authenticated cases in which far more hideous evils have resulted. Could I ask a woman to run that risk? Would you dare let Helen do so?"

Winters made an appealing gesture.

"I'll say no more," he yielded tremulously. "I admit I was mistaken. . . . God bless you, Harry!"

For fully five minutes no word was spoken, each following his own train of thought. But suddenly a sound in the kitchen as of someone entering hurriedly caused them both to start, and Maggie burst into the room.

"Plaze, sor," she panted, "Oliver's raisin' the divvil in the bar-rrn. Will ye plaze help me see what's the matter?"

And thus the discussion came to an inglorious but definite conclusion.

XVII

"THERE'S no need of your coming," protested Harry, as Winters rose with evident intention of joining the expedition.

"If there's excitement on the tapis, I propose to share it," was the stout rejoinder.

As a matter of fact, they were both a bit relieved to have a complete shift of thought, even though the means was not wholly of their choosing. Securing a lantern, the three hastened to the stable.

"He was scraychin' like a wild haythen," confided Maggie, as she fell discreetly into the rear. "It scairt me wits out as I was comin' in from the mate-market."

"This is the second time!" muttered Harry. "Once while I was out of town he had the tremens, and was a wreck when I got back."

"If it's 'D. T.'s' he's been drinking more than a few hours," suggested Winters.

"It hasn't been noticeable if he has," declared Harry.

"Hasn't it!" sputtered Maggie. "The desaytful Ike's been dhrunk a wake, an' niver showed it."

They entered the barn and mounted the boxed-in stairs, down which a series of low moans reverberated. Harry pushed open the door and raised the lantern, and its glow fell flickeringly on a sight far from pleasant. Upright in bed sat Oliver, his eyes wildly staring, his face purple, and his white hair damp and matted. With his shirt torn fairly to ribbons, and the perspiration dripping from his brow, he looked a veritable little old man of the sea—and a highly agitated one!

Confused by the light and the sudden apparitions about him, he ceased his cries, and sat there blinking and quivering.

"It's just a trifle close in here," smiled Harry. "Suppose you open that window, Maggie."

Maggie complied, remarking prettily that the place "shmelt like a gin-mill."

"An' that's how he buys it!" she

cried wrathfully, pointing with a generous foot to two huge black bottles which evidently had rolled from the bed after yielding up their contents. "No wander th'ould rake feels— Holy Mother!"

A shriek that would have done credit to a Comanche rent the atmosphere and diverted attention from Maggie's observation. From a trembling, helpless bundle of nerves Oliver was suddenly transformed into a wild-eyed creature of strength and fury, and the next instant he had bounded forward and was beating the covers with his clenched fists.

"Kill 'em!" he cried. "Kill 'em! Bugs—bugs everywhere! Kill 'em!"

He pounded the bed and tore his hair, until trembling and exhausted he cowed at the foot of the bed in a breathless heap. Harry spoke to him soothingly, and the voice seemed to reassure the old man, for he allowed himself to be tucked under the covers again.

"If you'll go telephone for Dr. Perley, Maggie, we'll try to straighten things up a bit," was Harry's suggestion, and Maggie departed, quite willing to escape.

With some difficulty the two men succeeded in getting the sufferer out of his clothes and back into bed; but five minutes later he was sleeping.

"This is an agreeable affair to drag you into!" apologized Harry. "Don't you wish to go back to the house?"

"Not by a jugful! It's a diverting experience."

"A decidedly exasperating one! Surprising what strength the old chap developed!"

"Remarkable. When he first flew forward I thought—look out! He's off again!"

Oliver was stirring restlessly, but after a muffled groan or two he settled back on the pillow and allowed sleep once more to claim him.

"Poor old fellow!" muttered Harry. "It's pretty tough."

"Isn't it!" pityingly. "I should not care to be enjoying the moving-pictures he's seeing just at present."

They conversed in an undertone, while the old man continued to sleep uneasily.

"Cozy quarters he has here," remarked Winters. "Unusually comfortable place!"

"It wasn't much originally," explained Harry, "but Oliver's ingenuity has turned it into quite a home. The cupboard and the bookshelves he fitted up himself. He's very proud of his establishment, and, as a rule, keeps it in apple-pie order."

"The sailor in his cosmos."

"But there's a generous allowance of landlubber, as well. Just glance at that 'library' of his—you'll find enough horse-books and cow-books and sheep-books to equip an agricultural school."

"And a Bible, too!"

"That's his scrap-book, I think. Oliver's bump of religion isn't conspicuous, but he has a pronounced weakness for clippings of all descriptions. Almanacs and such that come through the grace of heaven and the penny-post, he especially esteems. I don't suppose there's a spavin cure or liniment on record that he couldn't dig out of that corpulent volume. Many a time I've seen him——"

A hair-raising yell invited visual as well as conversational attention to the gentleman in question. Troubles began with renewed vigor, and ten strenuous minutes were needed to restore comparative quiet. By that time all three were exhausted—Oliver weak and trembling, his attendants perspiring and out of breath—and at this juncture Maggie arrived with the doctor.

"An' I told him so at breakfast," she was explaining, as they entered. "There's the ould reprobate—look at him! An' now—to the room in general—"I'll git me night's slape."

After which delicate confidence she tripped down the stairs with unfairylike tread, and across to the house. At the kitchen steps she paused reflectively.

"Bad cess to the lot av 'em!" she remarked pleasantly. "Exciptin'

Misther Harry an' his father," she amended, as she entered and slammed the door.

The doctor—a young chap and a recent arrival in Hopeful—nodded pleasantly and turned to the bedside.

"A little touch of the demons, I understand," he remarked, with a cheerful smile. "Has he been carrying on a bit?"

Harry viewed his foster-father quizzically. "Has he?" he asked.

"Something tells me he has," was the grave reply.

They seated themselves for a well-earned rest, while the man of medicine began his examination.

"As perfect a case as ever cheap whisky inspired," was the verdict, a moment later. "And it looks bad."

"You don't mean actually dangerous!" exclaimed Harry anxiously.

"Critical," was the laconic reply.

"Well, well!" in surprise.

"His heart," explained the doctor, "has had just about all the strain it can stand at his age. How old is he, by the way?"

"I should say about sixty," ventured Harry.

"Fully," agreed Winters. "Probably more."

The physician turned to the bed, and, much to their surprise, addressed the patient himself.

"How old are you?" he demanded.

"I'm afraid you'll get little information from that source," smiled Winters.

But to his and Harry's amazement the old man opened his eyes and made rational answer.

"How old? I'll be sixty-two in August, sir."

Dr. Perley pursed his lips and shook his head dubiously.

"Have you a family?" he asked.

The result was quite unlooked for; like a shot Oliver sprang into a sitting posture and beat the bedstead a resounding thwack.

"Family!" he shrieked. "Family! That's good! God! that's good!"

Neither the voice nor the blows suggested waning strength, nor was a weakened heart in evidence when

efforts to quiet him were made. On the verge of hysterics, he burst into rasping laughter, but the paroxysm passed, and he continued his harangue.

"Family! *Family!* I've neither father nor mother nor sister nor brother! . . . Nor uncle nor aunt, either," he added reflectively.

"How about wife and child, then?" suggested the doctor, with ill-timed humor.

Oliver turned his hollow, bloodshot eyes toward the speaker, and glared savagely.

"Nor wife—damn you! Nor wife!" he snarled. "Do you hear? Nor wife! . . . Nor nothing"—with a sheepish grin—"nothing but a red-headed Chinese son in Hongkong, China!"

The doctor turned to the others with a laugh. "What rot's he talking now?" he asked.

But they were silent. With the same thought flashing through their startled minds, they were staring at each other spellbound.

"Impossible!" muttered Winters. "Absurd!"

But pale as a death-mask, Harry sprang to the bedside and seized Oliver by the shoulder.

"What's that?" he asked roughly. "What did you say?"

The old man glared at the newcomer without a sign of recognition. "Let go of me!" he muttered angrily. "Let go!"

Scarce knowing what he was about, Harry shook the shoulder somewhat roughly.

"Tell me what you said!" he demanded hoarsely.

The old man eyed him dazedly, and seemed to weaken.

"I said," he began slowly—then with sudden vehemence: "It's none of your damned business what I said! Let go of me, I say!"

Bewildered, Harry relaxed his hold. "Oliver!" he said, in a gentler tone. "Oliver!"

The excited look left the old man's eyes, and for a moment he seemed quite rational.

"Is it you, Mr. Winters?" he asked in a relieved tone. "What's the matter, sir?"

"Oliver," pursued Harry patiently, "you said something a moment ago about having a Chinese son."

In a twinkling the calm look vanished.

"I said it?" excitedly. "I did?" He burst into a volley of oaths, and beat the covers. "Well," with an uncanny laugh, "I have—I *have* a Chinese son. In Hongkong, China, and twenty-seven on Christmas Day! Do you hear—I have! And if you don't believe it," with an ugly leer, "see here!"

As if preparing to back his statements with a blow, he rolled up his sleeve, then pointed tremblingly to his hairy forearm. Harry leaned forward dazedly, and his face grew ghastlier still. For there, below the elbow, was the faint blue outline of a tattooed insignia—a star within a circle!

"Marked for identification!" chuckled Oliver. "Labeled—damn him! O. Star for me, O. Star for Oliver, Jr.!"

A fit of coughing seized him, and with an oath he sank back on the pillow, his body writhing, his fingers twitching. The doctor leaned forward as if expecting a crisis.

"It's coming," he muttered.

But Winters was looking at Harry, who, hollow-eyed and ashen, had stumbled to a chair in the corner, where he buried his face in his hands. Winters crossed to his side, but too agitated to speak he could only pat the trembling shoulders in silent sympathy.

Oliver started in to sing. In a rasping voice he burst into a sailor's maudlin ditty, brutal and indecent, switching suddenly to a flood of Billingsgate and a flow of meaningless chatter. The next instant—his mind reverting to his admissions of a few moments previous—he was talking pidgin-English.

"Sampan-ah! Sampan this-side!" he shouted. "My chilo—belong my chilo! Red-head but *maskee!* Some day hab long red pig-tail! *Hai yah!*"

Wretched and heartsick, yet impotent to comfort, Winters returned to his chair by the window. Harry, in the corner, seemed oblivious to all about him; while the physician scarcely stirred as he studied the drawn face on the pillow. The silence grew oppressive—so much so that a return of the delirium would have been a relief to overwrought nerves. The moments dragged along, and at last the doctor raised his head.

"How is he now?" asked Winters eagerly.

The physician hesitated, and glanced grimly toward the huddled figure in the corner.

"He is dead," he answered in an undertone.

XVIII

THE next afternoon all that was mortal of Oliver Starr was given decent burial.

Upon Harry the effects of the evening's revelation might have been far more serious had not Winters been there to comfort and sympathize, but under the circumstances he bore up with remarkable fortitude. At the first possible moment he fell back upon his well-tried panacea of hard work, and now when sorely needed it did not fail him. Not once did he or Winters refer to the deathbed episode, but the elder man's gentleness and quiet understanding helped wonderfully to lighten depression.

Three days passed, and things about the household began to reassume their customary aspect. At the beginning of a new week Winters noted with satisfaction that Harry was starting for the office with at least a show of his old-time cheerfulness, while in the kitchen Maggie—who since the funeral had permitted herself no more light-hearted expression than a pious prayer—was bursting unwittingly into high-keyed melody. Left to his own devices, Winters settled himself in the library to smoke his morning cigar and ponder over the strange events of the week before.

"Whoever could have foreseen the rocky road that boy would have ahead of him!" was more than once the tenor of his troubled thoughts. "Who could have?"

His face lighted with a reminiscent smile as he recalled the stocky little red-haired chap of a few years previous—quick-witted and alert, gentle, yet a boy to the finger-tips! His thoughts reverted to the days of Amah and her plump, contented charge; then still further back to a weird, unkempt little mite borne home in a sedan-chair.

"Could he possibly have been better off in that filthy sampan?" he wondered. "At least he would have had little capacity for mental suffering there. But what a life for one with white man's blood in his veins!"

Whenever he thought of Oliver Starr he was filled with unutterable disgust and loathing.

"The beast!" he muttered, time and again. "Ugh! what a beast! . . . I wonder," he mused, "if he made his home on the sampan? But no, he couldn't have—it already had a head of the family. He must have had a place on shore where the woman visited him—in all likelihood with the full consent of her lord and master. . . . It must have extended over quite a period, too—else Oliver would not have known of the child's existence—much less have recognized its claim. . . . Ugh! what a life!"

In the midst of speculation along this none-too-pleasant line Maggie appeared in the doorway.

"Axin' y'r pardon, sor," she began, with unwonted timidity, "but are ye busy, sor?"

"Not overburdened, Maggie. What is it?"

"Nuthin', sor," nervously, "only I wondered would ye moind doin' me a bit uv a favor, sor."

"I shouldn't wonder," with a smile. "What is it?"

"Well, sor, Misther Harry sez I'm t' fix up Oliver's room—saints presairve us!—f'r the noo shtable-boy. An' divvil a bit do Oi care t' go there, sor—lastewise by meself!"

"And so," laughed Winters, "you'd like me to act as chaperon. Is that it?"

"Not t' put ye to such throuble as that, sor," somewhat puzzled. "But just to go there wid me, an' mayhap shmoke y'r cigar, sor."

"Surely," acquiesced Winters. "And between us we should be a match for a dozen spooks."

Maggie crossed herself piously. "Thank 'ee, sor," she murmured, much relieved.

Smiling good-naturedly, Winters led the way to the stable, while Maggie followed at a discreet distance, laden with broom and dust-pan. No officious spirit blocked their passage to the upper chamber, and the only change discernible when once inside was a layer of dust which Maggie promptly proceeded to transfer from the furniture to the atmosphere.

"Hold on there!" begged Winters, as he took a chair by the open window. "Suppose you make up the bed first. By that time you may be able to finish without my assistance."

Maggie complied cheerfully to the suggestion. Already she felt courage fast returning.

"An' what shall I do with thim things?" she asked, indicating Oliver's pretentious library. "Th' clothes an' things I'm to give away. The ould thrunk goes in the attic. But the books Misther Harry didn't say."

"We'll see later," suggested Winters indifferently.

Curiosity prompted him to rise and glance along the shelves, and he found their contents quite as heterogeneous as could be imagined. Immigration Reports of ancient date rubbed covers with the Farmer's Almanack and Diseases of the Horse, while their neighbors were equally enlivening.

"What jolly evenings the old fellow must have had!" thought Winters. "And there's the scrapbook."

He took down the cumbersome volume and idly turned over its pages of yellow, thumb-marked clippings.

"A friend of the muses, too!" as he came to a section devoted entirely to

verse. One piece in particular was carefully marked as an evidence of special approval.

I care not where I'm going to,

I care not whence I came;

I care not whether good report

Or evil marks my name.

I only care to have today

Care-free. I fear not sorrow.

I'll waste no worry on the past,

And none upon the morrow.

"Charming! Beautiful!" commented Winters. "But I think that will be quite enough, thank you kindly. . . . Fond of poetry, Maggie?"

"I couldn't sphake 'Mary's Lamb'!" was the coquettish answer.

Winters was about to close the uninteresting volume and return it to its shelf, when on one of the pages the word "Hongkong" chanced to catch his eye. He located the page and found it devoted to a letter—a badly-scrawled affair bearing a San Francisco date-line, but no date.

"I don't suppose Oliver will mind particularly," was his reasonable reflection, and he proceeded to read.

DEAR OLIVER (the missive ran), I got your letter wich was wrote some months ago in Java. It was forwarded from Hongkong, as I left a full year ago. I knowed youd write to me some time if you was alive, and I kept this paper wich I send, for I thot you'd like to know what they thot of you. I sort of thot the same till your letter told me what you acherly done. How you could is a mystry, but its none of my bizzness. I wouldnt want my flesh and blood on a stinking sampan. If you ever come this way stop and see me.

Yours truly,

JAMES JENKS.

"Edifying epistle!" mused Winters. "Wonder what it's all about!"

He glanced again at the bedraggled letter, then at the foot of the page, where a clipping—evidently from the newspaper referred to—was carefully pasted.

"The Hongkong *Pilot*," read Winters. "Why, that sheet went out of existence twenty years ago! It went under after the *Press* was started."

With interest he perused the paragraph, and as he read his expression underwent a most surprising change. Scarcely had he completed a line or

two when he uttered an ejaculation that caused Maggie to look at him wonderingly.

"What is it, sor?" she demanded. But he kept on reading, and made no answer.

Suddenly he leaped to his feet, fairly trembling with excitement.

"Maggie!" he exclaimed breathlessly. "Maggie!"

"W-what, sor?" she faltered, edging away.

"Run!" he cried. "Run as fast as you can to Harry, and tell him I must see him!"

"Y-yes, sor. B-but what's the trouble, sor?"

"Hurry—hurry, I say!" excitedly.

Convinced that his senses and he had parted company, Maggie turned and lumbered down the stairs as if an entire battalion of spooks were in pursuit.

"Tell him to come to the library," Winters shouted after her.

With face aglow and eyes shining, he seized the scrapbook and hurried to the house. Nor had he long to wait, for Harry, alarmed by Maggie's incoherent message, burst breathlessly into the room.

"Has something happened, sir? Are you ill?"

Winters, heated and agitated, was standing by the table and clutching it for support.

"Harry," he gasped. "Do—do you know who your mother was?"

That he was out of his mind seemed too apparent, and Harry's fears increased accordingly.

"Be calm, sir," he begged. "Sit down and tell me what's the trouble."

But instead Winters pointed a trembling finger at the scrap-book open before him.

"Read that!" he whispered hoarsely. "Read!"

Thoroughly mystified, Harry scanned the printed paragraph, while Winters waited expectantly. The item read as follows:

HOSPITAL STEWARD MISSING

Oliver Starr, employed as a steward at the

Hongkong Hospital, has disappeared from the colony. He may have shipped on an outgoing vessel, but it is feared that he has killed himself and his child, as the latter, an infant, is also missing. Starr's wife, formerly a hospital nurse, died last week of cholera, and the loss is said to have unbalanced his mind. The police are investigating.

"But what does it mean?" faltered Harry.

"Mean!" excitedly. "Don't you see—don't you see! Deserted—left on a sampan! It means you're white, my boy—white clear through!" Winters's voice broke and the tears streamed down his cheeks. "Don't you understand?" he persisted.

But Harry was far too dazed for utterance. He stood there transfixed, while Winters continued exultantly:

"Isn't it plain as day? Could anything be clearer?"

"But are you sure?" asked Harry feebly. "Isn't there some mistake?"

"Mistake!" with fine scorn. "Mistake! Read this again, and the letter above it, too!"

Winters turned to the book, but the pages had shifted, and instead of the letter and clipping a photograph met his astonished gaze. One glance, and a shout more jubilant than ever escaped him.

"Another proof!" he cried. "Look! look!"

It was a family group of three—a tinted cabinet, the work of a Chinese photographer.

"Don't I know my chilo!" laughed Winters hysterically. "Don't you recognize yourself, my boy! . . . And Oliver—could you mistake him? . . . And the eyes, too, how much like yours!"

But Harry was looking at the third member of the group—a sweet-faced woman, with a mass of auburn hair. Long and tenderly he gazed; and with a dreamy, far-away look he still was gazing when Winters tiptoed from the room and left him to his reverie.

There was unmistakable activity about the Harry Winters household. Two expressmen were laboring with several trunks at the gate and receiving

Maggie's benedictions for having marred her "clane piazzy"; while, within doors, the master of the house and his guest were partaking of a hasty luncheon.

"There really isn't any particular rush," Harry was saying. "The train doesn't go until one, you know."

"Still," rejoined Winters prudently, "it's well to be on time . . . And soon," he beamed, "we'll be on our way! Wednesday in Chicago, Thurs-

day in New York, and by Friday at the latest there *ought* to be something to announce!"

"Aren't you taking things a bit for granted?" smiled Harry. "Suppose somebody has changed her mind?"

"My boy," confided Winters, with a twinkle, "I'll tell you how much that contingency worries me. I've wired her to start operations on her trousseau!"



MEMINISSE JUVABIT

ON RECEIVING A FRIEND'S POEMS AND A PIPB

By Arthur Upson

IN other years when I am gray and bent,
Dull-eyed and trembly-voiced,
Dear George, I'll think of you and ways we went
When our young hearts rejoiced.

Then, maybe, by some blazing inglenook
As the day wanes, I'll sit,
Laid open on my knee your poem-book,
Your English briar lit.

And maybe you, still young, will visit me,
Stroll up my garden walk,
Whistling the old-time college melody,
And pause an hour, and talk.



ROGERS—I consulted a clairvoyant before my marriage and asked her if she saw any breakers ahead.

BROWNE—What did she say?

"Said she saw twelve cooks and twenty-seven waitresses."

SAVING MORTIMER

By Juliet Wilbor Tompkins

OF course we knew there was something queer when Mortimer Willey described her to us, simply because no such goddess as he pictured would have looked at Mortimer Willey. He was the nicest little fellow in the world, always kind and happy and innocently grateful for trivial blessings, and he was pleasant to look at in a clean, round-cheeked way. He edited the literary supplement of the *Sentinel*, and did it fairly well, miraculously enough—for he hadn't the brains of a peanut in ordinary intercourse. I had been doing the *Sentinel's* woman's page for three years at the next desk, and so knew him well and was really fond of him; but I should as soon have thought of marrying my six-year-old nephew, Davy. And if I felt that way—for, honestly, I'd have married almost anything to be rid of that woman's page—it stood to reason that a queenly beauty with money enough to have two rooms at Mortimer's boarding-house wasn't going to love him for himself alone. And there certainly was not anything else to love him for. He was getting thirty-five dollars a week.

What I expected to see was some stray forlornity who looked dimly pretty in pink or blue and who never before had had a man aware of her existence; and when Mortimer asked us all to meet Miss Farnum at tea in a borrowed studio I went prepared to be thoroughly nice to her and to put her wholly at her ease by my friendly cordiality.

The first person I saw as I entered the studio was a tall girl being talked to by two women; and my instinctive thought

was a startled, "How did *that* come to get in here?" She was both young and handsome, but, oh, the greeny yellow of her brittle, waved hair, the dark edge on her eyelids, the smooth, enameled rose and white of her cheeks, the dreadful fashion-plate figure encased in snaky black scales! Her type was unmistakable, and I was meditating a few plain words to Mortimer on the subject of letting such a thing happen when he came beaming up to me. And, of course, she was the lady; and very simply and sweetly she greeted me, with some murmur of having heard a great deal about me, which I was too dazed to answer properly. I got away from her as quickly as I could, and found Clare Sanborn and Teddy Welsh lurking behind some palms, looking just the way I felt. Clare was doing a novelette a week for us then, and Teddy was sporting editor, and they both were fond of Mortimer, as, indeed, everyone was, in a fashion. Teddy pulled up a seat for me and I dropped limply down.

"That poor, dear, good Mortimer!" said Clare; and she actually had tears in her eyes.

"How came he to be such a little fool!" I burst out.

"But he always was," said Clare sadly. "Only it hasn't mattered before."

Mortimer flew by us at that moment, looking so radiant that it nearly broke our hearts.

"Can't we save him?" I exclaimed. "Teddy, isn't there some way to wake him up?"

He shook his head. Teddy was a little hard to bear at that period, he was so full of worldly knowledge. He made

you wait for his utterances, and barely moved his lips when at last he did speak so that you had to ask "What?" until you were furious.

"A man in that state can't be waked up," he explained patiently. "The only way is through the girl."

"Ask her to let him go?" The crass ignorance of this suggestion seemed to hurt him; he winced and moved his shoulders uneasily. "Well, what, then?" I asked somewhat sharply.

The answer was evidently too obvious to be endurable in words, but he finally brought it out: "Shove something better into her way."

"And you think she would throw him over?"

"I don't need to 'think,'" he smiled faintly; "I simply know it. Such a marriage would broaden and develop some fellows," he went on reflectively. "In such a case I should not lift a finger against it. But Mortimer will not gain by the experience; he will be irretrievably hurt."

We could hear Mortimer laughing, the nice, plump laugh that must so soon be crushed out of him if he married that woman. I think we all realized at the same instant that it simply must not happen. Clare and I began to talk ways and means—very ineptly, no doubt, for Teddy was presently irritated into taking charge himself.

"It is perfectly simple," he assured us. "You have only to introduce her to some fool with money—she will do the rest. Trust her."

"Where can we find the fool with money?"

"Why— Oh, I say! I have him!" In spite of himself, the boy underneath flashed out for a moment. "I know an idiot who has just pulled a fortune out of roulette. She could land him in a week, with Mortimer out of the way."

"Then we will get him out of the way," we declared.

It was not easy to devise a plan for this. We were quite stumped until Clare thought of the Exposition. The paper had its regular men out there, of course, but she contended that they ought to send a man of a literary cast, like Mortimer,

to pick up side impressions and historical allusion and all that. This seemed so brilliant that we went straight down to the managing editor with the suggestion, and Teddy actually condescended to wait in the corridor and see what luck we had.

At first we had none at all. The managing editor in all geniality sat on the proposition with a firmness that left us only two alternatives. We rose to accept the first, then I veered over to the second and told him the whole story. He was only amused at first, but he finally recognized the seriousness of the case, and when we offered up two weeks' salary each to help defray the extra expense, he came right down and said he would do it without that—Mortimer was a silly little chap, but he was fond of him and would gladly keep him out of a scrape. And so we went out rejoicing, and Teddy nearly looked pleased.

Mortimer's pride in his commission made us ache.

"It does seem as if every good thing were coming to me at once," he confided to me. "There's that queenly girl, born to the highest society—isn't it just like a fairy tale? And now being picked out and sent like this to the Exposition—I declare, Miss Duncan, I don't dare sneeze, I'm so afraid I'll wake up!" And he laughed all over while I nearly cried. For the moment I heartily wished that we need not save him.

He came down the next morning to arrange his affairs, for he was to leave by the night train.

"Do go to see Miss Farnum," he begged as he wrung our hands. "Look out for her a little—will you, Teddy? She doesn't know many people here."

"I will see that she has company," Teddy promised, and Mortimer was so grateful that we were ashamed to lift our eyes.

He was to be gone three weeks, and Teddy assured us that that was ample time—for her sort. He had arranged his campaign very cleverly, and had a strong case of piqued curiosity, with a rival in reserve, ready to offer up to

Miss Farnum the moment her victim was off. A glimpse of her on the street that afternoon, her impossible hair and figure drawing all eyes after her as she swept up Broadway on three-inch heels, quite settled my scruples. Good little Mortimer deserved a better fate than that.

When I arrived at the office the next morning Teddy was musing over an open letter. He seemed even more disinclined to speech than usual, so I turned to my desk, but presently I was interrupted by the appearance of the open letter, laid in front of me without comment. It was in Mortimer's handwriting, and began with a great flourish of ink.

Wish me joy, dear old chap! We were married half-an-hour ago, and are off to the Exposition for our wedding-trip. How is that for a girl—to give up trousseau and bridesmaids and all that, and marry on three hours' notice? And it was all her own idea. I am the happiest fellow alive, and I wish you all the same joy, sooner or later. Of course, I shall not let this interfere in the slightest with my duties to the office. Expect copy Thursday at latest.

With warm regards to all,

Faithfully yours,

MORTIMER WILLEY.

Well, there really wasn't anything to say. I handed it back very sadly.

"If she will only be fairly good to him!" I sighed.

"But what in thunder does she want of him?" mused Teddy.

That was the week that my amazing legacy from Aunt Laura came like a delivering angel. Clare was only too glad to step into my place at the office, so I resigned at once and set out for home, the most cured young woman on the subjects of freedom and journalism that ever flew back to a dear, shabby, peaceful old home nest. Clare soon left the *Sentinel* to do magazine work, and I heard little or nothing about the people there until I was in the city again, two years later. I was going down to see them all, but before I found time I met Mortimer Willey on the street. He rushed up to me, and, to my amazement, I found him so plump, so radiant, that I presently ventured a cautious,

"How are things going with you?"

"Words can't describe it! Why, Miss Duncan, I didn't know a fellow could have such happiness—didn't know it existed." He was unmistakably sincere. "Every time I look at that queenly girl, and realize that she is my wife—I tell you, it takes you right here! And we've got a little girl—didn't you know that? Do go up and see her right now; she is in with a cold and will be so pleased! And I want you to see our flat."

Of course I went, as fast as the Elevated could take me. Was it a case of reform—should I find her in the black gown and turn-over collar and cuffs in which the erring turn over a new leaf? Or was poor Mortimer being adroitly fooled and used? And what had she wanted of him, anyway?

The first glimpse flouted the reform theory. The pink satin negligée was as flamboyant as the brittle yellow hair; the face was as elaborately touched up as ever. She greeted me with very simple cordiality, and asked me to come into her bedroom, as the sun was streaming in there. I was shown the small daughter, and all our talk was of homely, domestic things, such as any prosaic little wife might have discussed. I was puzzled, a little irritated: her affectation of stupidity seemed to me overdone. On the dressing-table was a glaring array of bottles, jars and cosmetics, all in gold filigree cases, and presently, impatient to get somewhere, I ventured to notice them.

"Aren't they handsome!" she returned. "They were my mother's."

"I have never used these things; I shouldn't know how to go about it," I hazarded.

"Yes, I have noticed that you literary ladies don't," she assented placidly. "I suppose it belongs to fashionable life. My mother and all her friends did—she moved in a very brilliant circle. She was such a regal woman, Miss Duncan! I wish you could have seen her. I was at the convent most of the time, but home was just like fairyland."

"Do tell me about it." I was beginning dimly to suspect.

"I was there so little it's like a dream. My mother entertained profusely, and gentlemen called every day, at all hours, and gave her beautiful presents—everybody simply idolized her! When I was eighteen I was to go home, and the nuns cried dreadfully about it, but I was so happy I could hardly bear it. And then, just a month before my birthday, she died."

We sat silent until her lips were steady again.

"What did you do then?" I asked finally.

"I stayed on with the sisters for three years. There really wasn't anything else to do. We hadn't a single relative, not even a cousin: it was very queer, and I think my mother felt badly about it, for she never liked to speak of it. For all she had been so rich, the estate was quite small; but it gave me

enough to live on, and when I came to the city I still had all her beautiful clothes—they only needed a little altering."

"You came to the city?" I suggested.

"Yes. I thought I ought to see something of the world, so I took rooms at that boarding-house. The nuns hated it, and they told me dreadful things about the world—oh, you'd never believe! They didn't frighten me; I knew in my heart it was all nonsense. So I came down. And there I met Mr. Willey. He was at the table that first night." She drew a deep breath. "He's so good and dear, and so brilliant! I never dreamed that a literary gentleman could see anything in me. Isn't life wonderful, Miss Duncan!"

"Indeed, indeed, it is!" I said solemnly, with apology in my heart.



WHEN I AM DEAD

By John G. Neihardt

WHEN I am dead, and nervous hands have thrust
 My body downward into careless dust;
 I think the grave could not suffice to hold
 My spirit prisoned in the sunless mold.
 Some subtle memory of you would be
 A resurrection of the life of me.
 Yea, I would be, because I love you so,
 The speechless spirit of all things that grow.
 You could not touch a flower but it would be
 Like a caress upon the cheek of me.
 I would be patient in the common grass,
 That I might feel your footfall should you pass.
 I would be kind as rain and pure as dew,
 A loving spirit round the life of you.
 When your soft cheeks by perfumed winds were fanned,
 'Twould be my kiss, and you would understand.
 But, when some sultry, storm-bleared sun had set,
 I would be lightning—if you dared forget!

"THE LINE OF FATE"

By Anna A. Rogers

PHILITON—Edwin, the writer—who was a living refutation of the saying that "genius is patience," met Mrs. Cossiter at one of Miss Jane's very first dinners given after her trip around the world, when she was once more settled in her home in "The City of Unfinished Stories," as our Capital has been well named.

"You're to take her in to dinner, so don't waste anything on her now. She's Carol Cossiter, you know!" whispered Miss Jane to him, as she dragged him across the room.

But it so happened that he didn't know in the least, and furthermore, didn't dare admit it to Miss Jane, for one never felt sure about what she might take it into her head to say. No one was sacred from her passion for the eccentric.

"That's downright horrid of you, Miss Jane! Your remark implies an all-too-intimate knowledge of my poor store of wit," he scolded, striding after her, his spirits falling with each step toward a certain small figure dressed in some sort of billowy black stuff, whom he ought apparently to have known all about—and didn't.

"Nonsense!" gasped Miss Jane in her breathless way. "It only implies about thirty years' knowledge of the laws of dining-out. It's like our wretched National Hymn—if you start in on too high a key, with the *hors d'œuvre*, so to speak, by the time you reach the roast— Mrs. Cossiter, I want you to meet my old friend, Mr. Philiton—Edwin W., you know. He's the real reason why I'm an old maid! I adored him twenty years ago—oh, you know I did! He broke my heart,

that's all. Refused me again and again! But—I make him eat my dinners just the same!" chuckled Miss Jane in a *sotto voce* that could easily have been heard in the garret. "You two—of course, know each other by reputation. I always bunch writers together—they're sure either to hate or love each other's work. I don't care a rap which. It makes for conversation either way. Oh, there's the assistant-secretary!"

And Miss Jane swooped across the room like a huge swallow, and wrung in her enthusiastic way the limp hand of an obviously recusant guest, fresh from the obsession of his day's work. The Austrian Emperor was ill; the diplomatic world had its fingers on his pulse. It was only by the merest chance that the assistant-secretary of state had remembered Miss Jane's dinner in time.

Then the white-haired ex-secretary entered with his wife; both mellowed and enriched by time, like good wine. "She's a soft landscape of mild earth," had been said of her in London, even before her hair had turned white.

An Oriental attaché and his wife soon followed, a newspaper correspondent of international reputation, then a naval officer with his stayed-at-home-with-the-children wife; he, hustling, talkative, laughing much, with an eye that had seen much and was not averse to seeing more; she, silent, shy, still in her mental teens. They had all come. Miss Jane's Chinese butler announced dinner.

Philiton thought uneasily as he settled down beside Mrs. Cossiter at the table: "Hang it all! What has

she done, this 'Carol' woman? Why 'Carol'?"

Mrs. Cossiter meanwhile thought bitterly of her hostess for not warning her, giving her a cue of some sort, something besides that senseless "Edwin W."—as if that W. made his whole biography clear in a flash!

Determined to avoid the subject of books, Philiton made a brilliant opening by asking inanely if Mr. Cossiter were present. She flushed and answered softly that he was not. To hide a growing nervousness, Philiton waxed jocose about absent husbands, and quoted an ancient equation:

"Three maids to equal a widow,
And three of her far falleth short,
Of the wife away from her spouse!"

And then he wished he were dead! Her startled eyes, her grave silence, her black gown told him the truth, and he glared at Miss Jane murderously across the table, and muttered something abject to Mrs. Cossiter. For the next twenty minutes the two strained conversationally away from each other, right and left; and then the little widow asked him a question gently and kindly, and metaphorically he cast himself at her feet and kissed the hem of her garment. When his nerves became steady he looked at her and found that she was neither young nor beautiful; but she had a way of listening and smiling and saying briefly just the right word which made a man feel, at least temporarily, that he was himself saying some rather remarkable things. Philiton actually had more than one twinge of writer's regret that he was wasting so much in conversation; and he wondered if he would recall any of it by the time he got back to his notebook.

It was one of Miss Jane's usual dinners, when a rare pause in the animated talk was pounced upon hungrily by a half-dozen voices, only waiting for a chance to be heard. Under cover of it Philiton and Mrs. Cossiter wandered far afield, unnoticed, and he at least was astonished when Miss Jane put down her napkin and arose from the table. He asked several questions

after the women had left them, and learned that Mrs. Cossiter's marriage had not been a happy one, although she had never admitted the fact; that she had been a widow almost three years; and had written two unsuccessful novels—too esoteric for public taste, her publishers said.

After the men had finished their cigars they joined the women in the library, and Miss Jane tossed two books upon her broad desk and announced to the room that a natural desire to enhance the value of her library led her to demand the autographs of the two well-known writers present.

"Hear! hear!" murmured the assistant-secretary absently, his mind far away on the Hungarian border, responding automatically to Miss Jane's oracular tone.

"Well-known in the sense of knowing myself," laughed Philiton, reluctantly following the bent of his hostess's imperious forefinger.

As he sat at the desk bowed over his latest literary failure, Mrs. Cossiter got her first fair impression of him: a large man, heavily built, with a fine head covered with gray hair worn very short for a man of the pen. His features were irregular, with large near-sighted gray eyes, and something pathetic about the good, clean mouth. He got up and lounged over to a place beside her.

"Next!" he cried, with a laugh, holding out his hand.

"Hush! perhaps Miss Jane will forget me. I never could—I never will—if I can escape it. I'd rather—" Then Miss Jane swept the little authoress up to the desk, and Philiton in his turn stared across at her as if for the first time.

"She's like—what is she like? Some soft unaccented melody played at twilight, not very wonderful in itself, which starts vibrations in men's sentiments, men's memories," he thought to himself; and then she left the desk and sat down by one of the attachés, to whom Philiton took an instantaneous dislike, and worked him in as the villain in his next short story.

The ex-secretary's wife drew on her gloves with caressing little motions of her plump jeweled fingers, and then she arose, and the dinner was over. The assistant-secretary was out of the house before the ladies' wraps were on, and he was rushing back through the night to the tryst with his work; passionately, as if beauty awaited him instead of cable codes.

Philiton lingered a moment by the desk in the now empty library and read the title of Carol Cossiter's book, of which he had never even heard. "The Line of Fate," read he, and then with an ejaculation and a laugh he left the room.

Mrs. Cossiter had already seen the title of Philiton's book while at Miss Jane's desk. She in her turn had never read any of his books, nor even seen the name of this one: "The Line of Life." The reason she had reseated herself by the foreign attaché was to hide her uncontrollable surprise which would discover to Philiton the unforgivable fact that she had never before even heard of his book.

He had meant to see more of Mrs. Cossiter, to arrange something before they parted that night, but the consciousness of not knowing her book, whose title seemed so strangely allied to his own, checked him, and so they separated.

II

THE next afternoon, after an abominable night, Philiton strolled in to Lusk's and asked for Mrs. Cossiter's book, "The Line of Fate." Old Peffers, who always waited on him, supposing that his customer was asking for his own book, replied in his shy, nervous, hesitating way:

"We are all out of it, Mr. Philiton; and our order has for some reason been delayed," and all the rest of the professional jargon which lets the author of unsuccessful books down gently.

Philiton laughed, and then explained that it was Carol Cossiter's book that

he wanted, "The Line of Fate," not "The Line of Life."

"We've never handled her books," explained Peffers, lowering his voice, and moving near to Philiton, rather to his surprise.

"Oh, I thought perhaps you had just ordered another huge consignment of that, too, also unaccountably delayed!" laughed Philiton, quite without bitterness. But the old clerk flushed and seemed so ill at ease that Philiton abruptly told him to order a copy of Mrs. Cossiter's book and charge to his account. As Peffers was taking down his order, Philiton asked:

"I suppose as her book has had no success you don't get the net price?"

"Well, you see, sir, it's new," replied Peffers nervously, still unaccountably whispering, "and her books have always been net—cream paper, colored illustrations bring them up to one-fifty, and there she stays. She has a publisher who believes in her work—that's why we stopped handling her."

"A seventy-five cent 'Line of Fate' would have been a better investment, you think!" went on Philiton in his loud, cheerful voice. The clerk sighed and wiped his brow with a blue silk handkerchief.

Philiton was accustomed to literary free-lists, rebates, autograph copies, and all the other privileges of authorship, and nothing went so against his grain as spending money on current literature, so after a moment's hesitation he said:

"Peffers, I say, suppose we let that order go for the present. I don't really care to own it, and I'll glance over it at the library, and put the money into something really worth while. I want that new edition of Gautier's *Constantinople*; the edition that——"

"Good afternoon!" interrupted a quiet voice at his elbow, and Philiton's startled eyes met the inscrutable ones of Mrs. Cossiter looking across the corner of the high stand of new books on biography and travel, beside which he had been standing.

"Gods and demigods! how long has she been there?" darted through Phili-

ton's brain, even as he sprang forward and held out an effusive hand. Peffers fled.

There was a certain intentness in Mrs. Cossiter's eyes, a flushed, rather excited look in her face which Philiton found very becoming and alluring, and he forgot everything but that he was very glad to see her again. They left the shop together and walked slowly through the broad, quiet streets to her house, talking rapidly, breathlessly of everything under the canopy of heaven—except books!

After he had rung her bell for her, and declined her rather perfunctory request to enter, he walked away, regretting that he had not ordered her book—net price and all!

"Her publisher is probably in love with her, and no wonder! Cream paper and colored plates—why not? Couldn't decently do less! She's the nicest little thing I've met for a month of Sundays; but I do wish I'd read her pesky book!"

Before he had walked twenty steps away Mrs. Cossiter was glued to her telephone and calling up Lusk's. When she got them she asked for Peffers, to whom she said:

"That you. Mr. Peffers? Well, you remember the book I was just talking to you about? Edwin Philiton's, yes. Well, I've changed my mind again; I must have it, whatever it costs. Please get it for me at once. . . . *What?* Take *two* weeks! Well, let it go, I'll have to look it up in the library. Thank you; good-bye."

A moment later, as she began to take off her wraps, she suddenly cried aloud: "I hate people who have done things—unless they have done them well enough to keep their vanity fed fat with serenity!"

Whereby Mrs. Cossiter meant herself, being still wounded from what she had overheard that afternoon, standing behind that wall of biography and travel.

III

A WEEK passed, and then Philiton

discovered one morning, just when he was writing at white heat, that his pads had given out. He worked out his inspiration on his best note-paper, using it up, envelopes and all, and then, leaving his hero's character in picturesque ribbons, he paused for lunch. After which, spent, limp, unspeakably irritable from the reaction of such writing, he wandered downtown to the department-store which was the only place in that town of strict limitations where he could get his beloved huge yellow pads.

He had all a man's hatred for such places; for that congestion of women in their least attractive phase. So, buttoning up his sensibilities, he plunged in through the revolving door.

As he walked rapidly down the aisle toward the stationery, through the streets and alleys and flowering parks of books on the fourth floor, his eyes lighted on a sign picked out in tiny green electric lights, hung over the far end of a long, heavily-laden table:

BIBLIO-BUTCHERY. NOTABLE NOVELS.
FORTY-FIVE CENTS.

To pass a counter of discounted books without at least one glance in search of one's friends or enemies, is an act as yet unachieved among the writers of the day. So Philiton stopped; laughed to see his friend De Messer's book among the outcasts, frowned to find his own beside it. Then a moment later he smiled with returning equanimity at discovering Mrs. Cossiter's!

After a quick glance about, he bought Carol Cossiter's "The Line of Fate."

"Forty-five cents for an evening of boredom! And quite enough, too," he thought, and seizing the book from the clerk he turned abruptly down the aisle and almost overthrew Mrs. Cossiter! Even as he apologized, he noticed that she was carrying on top of her muff a book wrapped in brown paper, wonderfully like the parcel which he congratulated himself upon

having already slipped into his overcoat pocket. Had she just bought her own book? He began to smile down at her sympathetically; then suddenly his smile faded away. She might just as well have been buying his! Oblivious of his own inconsistency, he turned his irritable face away for a moment to get his temper in hand, and when his eyes returned to her he noticed that her parcel was hidden by the muff. It was *his*, and she dreaded possible questions! Forty-five cents for all the years of living he had put into that unhappy child of his brain; the fierce joy of creation, the agony of barren moods, the passionate ecstasy, the suicidal despair!

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Cossiter," he said rather stiffly. As he walked away he recalled with no little animus the look of obvious relief which had sprung into her mobile face as they so abruptly separated.

That night two lights burned far into the morning in different parts of the northwest district of the quiet city; not beside sick-beds, but beside two hale and hearty middle-aged individuals. A man breathlessly reading a green-covered novel; a woman "plunged soul forward" into the contents of an octavo bound in brown.

At a quarter of two he closed his book very gently, and put it under his pillow; turned off the electric switch, and whispered to himself aloud in the dark: "I'll write her tomorrow. I must tell her at once what it means to me. It's all there was in mine, and more!"

At two o'clock the gray-haired woman was reading the last page of the brown book, and crying luxuriously among her pillows. And then her light was extinguished and she lay awake till dawn. Once she said aloud: "I'll write to him at once, tomorrow, today. I must tell him what it says to me. It's all that there was in mine, and so much more!"

But the following day began so late for them both that it ended in a vortex of belated duties and engagements,

which deferred the writing of those two letters.

Not until five o'clock did Carol Cossiter catch up with her day, when she was to be found in that cozy corner at the Country Club on the right of the great fireplace. She and three other women had just finished their bridge and ordered tea. It was already twilight, and yet the crimson afterglow lingered across the links.

"We are so glad, Carol, to have you once more in the world with us, and I hope this time you're going to stay," Miss Jane was saying with even less than her usual felicity, referring to the long interval of mourning when Mrs. Cossiter had gone into eclipse. One of the other women coughed gently, to carry off her own sense of Miss Jane's inadvertence; and then some men lounged in, their faces ruddy from their ride out from town; their legs, good or bad, equally shapeless in leather puttees.

They saw the four women and joined them, that corner having an accommodating gift for expansion, or contraction, as required of it.

And so Philiton found himself unexpectedly beside Mrs. Cossiter, his glass of whisky and water reposing cozily on the round table, beside her cup of tea. He was breathing hard, partly from his fast ride, partly from the shock of meeting her so soon after the night alone with her book, her intimate thoughts, her soul.

Somehow the demure little woman in gray, sitting there beside him, did not look capable of all that surge of emotion that dashed against the rocks of convention all through her book. And yet—that sudden light in her brown eyes which fell in some confusion before his rather intense gaze! Why did she look at him like that? As if something very unusual had passed between them; as if—but even in these telepathic times she could not have been aware of how he had spent the previous night! Nor how full his mind and heart had been of her and her book all day.

After one or two gulps from his

glass, he leaned toward her, his hands on his stout crop, and said under cover of the general laugh which followed one of Miss Jane's indiscretions:

"You didn't follow 'Palmo' very strictly in your data, did you?"

"Data?"

"Your book, of course. I've wanted for—for some time—to ask you about it," remarked this perfidious man.

She looked at him sharply a moment, and then smiled straight into his eyes. A startled look came into his face, and then complete illumination. Their faces grew as rosy as the cushions about them, and then they sat back and laughed aloud.

"At least I remained honest!" she cried.

"At least I tried to be civil!"

"For sometime!" Aren't you ashamed of yourself? You've read my book since you asked old Peffers for it at Lusk's!"

"You paid forty-five cents for mine!" he returned.

"You did not get mine at Lusk's, sir!"

"Well, anyhow, I love it—your book."

"And I yours!" They shook hands, and Miss Jane cried in pretended terror:

"They're going to collaborate! We are lost, to a man! 'At every word a reputation dies!'"

"You flatter me," said the assistant-secretary dreamily, coming in alone from the links wearily dragging his clubs after him. He made his eighteen holes every day till the snow came, always alone. They all shouted to him to join them and "be human," but he refused, and took the trolley-car back to the city and his work.

"Thank God, I'm still free, and only forty!" exclaimed Miss Jane, fully aware that all the world knew that she was at least partly responsible for the assistant-secretary's persistent solemnity.

"A writer's work is nearer to him than his kin," Philton was saying to Mrs. Cossiter; "his sensitiveness is like a living flame dancing around it, as the

wreath of fire that guarded the helpless Brunnhilde."

"There should be a separate day of judgment for an artist, and a jury of artists. For they alone can understand that with us it is not hypocrisy to weep and keep count of one's tears; and to take one's own pulse an instant after an impulse of murder, is not sickening insincerity; nor to love and be at once repulsed by a misshapen ear; nor yet in the end to take notes with the last glazed glance about one's death-bed, before sinking down into the blackness."

"And how in mercy's name are we to get along in heaven, when we fairly batten on imperfection!" And so the two writers went on, and under the hanging lamp, amidst the chatter and laughter of their friends, under the ever furtive eyes of the hovering club attendants, they began to study each other's hands, and disputed the value of Chiromy as pitted against Chiromancy. He coolly went back to the Cabala Code, as announced in the preface of his book. She leaned decidedly toward the more modern schools of palmistry, beginning about the time of Bellot, and she frankly admitted a free use of clairvoyance and telepathy. He pronounced her temperament to be wonderfully "harmonic." She, on her side, quite soberly regretted that she could not be equally courteous, dwelling with a certain tender reproof upon his abnormally spatulate fingers, which combined with a mound of Mars almost precipitous, took him entirely out of the Jupiterian type and branded him, "exaggerated—muscular—bilious—sanguine." He apologized a little sadly, but could not deny it.

"Do you think those two have gone mad on our hands?" whispered Miss Jane; "she called him bilious and he smiled! No sane person lets anyone but a doctor do that."

"The old, old madness, perhaps! Ah, Miss Jane, leave them alone," said the ex-secretary softly, leaning on the back of her chair, shaking his white head at her. And his tact and his wife's tender heart and long usage of

social arts managed to keep the talk away from the two sitting so closely together talking palmistry, oblivious of everything about them.

They were dimly aware that someone proposed that they should all stay out and dine at the club; vaguely conscious that there was a dinner, and that later on the others pulled up the rugs, and somebody played on the piano, and that a lot of people were whirling about.

The two novelists were suddenly brought back to the dreary limitations of sane living by Miss Jane's voice crying to them from the door:

"Mrs. Cossiter, Mr. Philiton, as I'm coming out for tennis in the morning I'll see you later, as it were!" Then they looked up to see the sleepy attendants already straightening out the magazines on the table, and everybody else gone. Mrs. Cossiter sprang up, and she and Philiton hurried down the walk after the others, and attached themselves to Miss Jane, one on either side.

"And although I'm a guaranteed non-conductor of sentiment," screamed that incorrigible spinster, "I do feel a few queerish twinges running through my ancient frame, that under any other circumstances I should have instantly attributed to sciatica." Mrs. Cossiter tried to stop her, but gave it up and laughed with all the others. No one had ever been able to check for long Miss Jane's almost historic audacities.

The next day Philiton sent a great box of roses to Mrs. Cossiter; the day after he called; and so it began and lasted all through that Winter. They were both happy enough and wise enough and old enough not to wish to disturb their delightful friendship.

But one evening, when it was warm enough to sit with wide-open windows, she gave a small dinner; and after all

the others had gone he lingered. And a certain unwisdom in his mood met an equal unwisdom in hers, and then all the rest of it quickly followed. He said irritably:

"I know I've got to go home, but I don't want to! I don't want to! So there!"

She gave him his chance, she held him off with banter, she finally begged him to go home at once and think better of it. She said, laughing at him:

"Every man is in love with every woman of his acquaintance for at least fifteen minutes, my friend. The thing is to avoid these danger spots. Go home!"

"I won't go home!" he cried, past all saving, determined on his own destruction or her capitulation.

It must have been quite midnight before he finally did go back to his chambers over the club.

Just before they parted when they were sitting a little nearer together than ever before, he sighed as if from a long race, well won, and said:

"Well, my book has proved a success, after all!" She was looking down at the large, irregular hand that had swallowed up her own very pretty little one, and she replied with much of her old demureness:

"Mine, too, has brought me what might be called a substantial honorarium!"

There was a pause, and then he said quizzically:

"But, Carol—think of my daring to say that right out like that! Carol, what I want to know is, do you think after a while, in the beginning, you would ever have paid net for my book? If you hadn't seen that green sign?"

"Well, as I fully expect to pay net in the end, suppose we let that matter rest!"

And then he laughed joyously, and consented to go home.



THE POINT OF VIEW

By A. M. Chisholm

MRS. HOLLISTER disapproved of young Robinson. He had appeared as an acquaintance of Miss Jean's, quite without credentials and palpably ill at ease. Also he had avoided, somewhat awkwardly, several leading questions framed with the object of ascertaining something about himself and his family. He was brown and healthy and his clothes fitted him well enough, but his hands bore unmistakable evidence of hard work, and that settled it from Mrs. Hollister's standpoint, so far as the advisability of his acquaintance with her niece, Miss Jean, was concerned. Her good night, when he departed, was plainly intended to discourage further intimacy.

On the other hand it was equally plain that Miss Jean's opinion of the boy did not at all coincide with her aunt's. And when she was examined on her knowledge of his antecedents her replies were vague and unsatisfactory. Therefore Mrs. Hollister constituted herself a judge and Billy Hollister and myself a jury, to try the issues of law and fact involved.

Miss Jean, in the rôle of star witness, occupied a low seat by the fire, looking most demure and childlike. Her hands were folded in her lap and her big brown eyes downcast. The firelight reflected from her glossy hair. Really, she is a charming little girl.

I glanced at Billy Hollister and he closed his right eye, which was the one farthest from his wife, deliberately. Miss Jean is a great favorite of his. If I were not so old, and if Miss Jean were not Fanny's—I mean Mrs. Hollister's—niece, and if a lot of other things were

different I might have been prejudiced. As matters stood I hope I was impartial.

"But you see, Jean, dear," said Mrs. Hollister, "you don't know a thing about him or his family. He seems quiet and respectable enough, but works in a—a *foundry*, you say?"

"No, Aunt Fan," said Miss Jean; "in an automobile factory."

"A garage, I suppose," said Mrs. Hollister. "Just an ordinary workman. Why, his hands are absolutely grimy!"

I observed Miss Jean regard her own slim hand furtively. No doubt she had shaken hands with the boy when he said good night, but still——

"Are his hands rough, Miss Jean?" I asked.

"Not so—oh, I don't think I ever noticed, Mr. Graham."

"And so," said Mrs. Hollister, "though of course I am always glad to see any of your friends, it seems to me he isn't quite a young man your mother would approve of, Jean. Now, is he? And you didn't even tell me how you happened to meet him."

"It was in a—a street-car, Aunt Fan," said Miss Jean, resting her chin on her hand and looking into the fire. I wondered if the flush on her cheek was due to the heat.

"But who introduced him?" asked Mrs. Hollister.

"Nobody; I—I think he introduced himself," said Miss Jean. No, decidedly the flush was not due to the fire.

"Why, Jean!"

"I couldn't help it, Aunt Fan. I had forgotten my purse, and the conductor

was so cross and looked at me as if—as if—and then he asked if he might pay for me.”

At this point I looked at Billy, who raised his eyebrows. I decided that in the interests of justice counsel was necessary, and I ceased to be a jurymen.

“Very proper,” I commented. “The modern maiden in distress and the up-to-date rescue. As a matter of fact it was lucky he did introduce himself, Miss Jean.”

“I thought so, Mr. Graham. And as he had been so nice and kind about it and got off the car when I did, I let him walk with me as far as the house.”

“Yes,” I said, delighted, in spite of an indignant look from Mrs. Hollister. “And then—what?”

“Why, then,” said Miss Jean, “of course I wanted him to wait while I ran in and got my purse to give him the fare he had paid, but he was in a hurry, and said he couldn’t wait.”

“Too bad,” I said. “And so you sent it to him in a letter, I suppose?”

“N-no; he said it might go astray, and he asked me if I ever walked in the Park, and when I said I didn’t he went away.”

Mrs. Hollister nodded approval. “That was right, Jean.”

“But you did walk in the Park,” I said.

“I didn’t know his name or where he lived, and of course I had to pay him back,” said Miss Jean defensively.

Mrs. Hollister shook her head sadly.

“Of course she had to,” I said. “She couldn’t do otherwise. And so she found out his name and where he lived. Robinson is a very respectable name. Where *does* he live, Miss Jean?”

“In some boarding-house, Mr. Graham. I don’t know where it is. I think he calls it The Annex.”

“What?” said I.

“Whew!” whistled Billy.

“The Annex? Oh, impossible!” said Mrs. Hollister. “He was joking, or trying to deceive you.”

“Let us say it was a joke,” said I, charitably. “A poor joke, too. Robinson! H’m!”

“How long ago *was* all this, Jean?” asked Mrs. Hollister.

“About three weeks ago, Aunt Fan! the first week I was with you.”

“But of course,” said I, “you have seen him several times since in the Park?”

“Yes, Mr. Graham,” said Miss Jean meekly.

“Oh, Jean, Jean!” said Mrs. Hollister, shaking her head reprovingly.

“Well, confess!” I said. “Make a clean breast of it, Miss Jean. The court is very much with you.”

“Once I went to a *matinée*,” said Miss Jean, regarding the fire intently, “and in an auto—oh, several times.”

“An automobile!” said Mrs. Hollister. “How could he afford—? Oh, I suppose because he works in a place where they repair them.”

“He said it didn’t cost anything,” said Miss Jean. “It was a machine his boss—I mean his employer—wanted him to try, and he said he would like to have my opinion because it was going to be used a great deal by a lady. And we had the loveliest runs and lunches.”

“Lunches?” I said.

“Lovely ones,” nodded Miss Jean, unashamed. “He said his b—employer insisted on carrying them in every car sent out, in case of a break-down outside the city.”

“Remarkably thoughtful employer or a very poor car, or both,” I said. “I must certainly look him up. But you didn’t break down?”

“No, Mr. Graham.”

“And you did eat the lunches. And so I suppose your runs carried you outside the city.”

“Well—just a little way,” admitted Jean, with some hesitation.

“My dear child,” said Mrs. Hollister, “you shouldn’t have done that. Goodness only knows who this young man is. I don’t think you had better see anything more of him, Jean. He seems to be just an ordinary machinist, even if he does choose to spend his earnings on *matinées* and lunches and can borrow an auto now and then and joke about living at The Annex.”

Miss Jean did not reply, and con-

tinued to regard the fire. I looked at Mrs. Hollister reflectively.

"I remember a case," I said, "of a girl—a rather good-looking, well-brought-up girl, too—who married a young fellow who hadn't much money and whose hands were not fit to be exhibited in polite society."

"Oh, do tell me about it, Mr. Graham," said Miss Jean, with suspicious eagerness.

"She shouldn't have done it," I said, "because at the same time there was another young chap who thought a great deal of her and whose hands were in fair condition, though he hadn't any more money than the other. This girl secretly admired the second man a great deal."

Mrs. Hollister gave me an indignant look and Billy grinned.

"He was worthy of her admiration," I went on firmly. "He was a thoroughly good, honest, likable young chap, and very clever, even brilliant. Wasn't he?" I appealed to Mrs. Hollister.

"Oh, did you know him, Aunt Fan?" cried Miss Jean. "How lovely!"

"Not by that description," said Mrs. Hollister, with meaning.

"I should say not," said her husband. "He was a conceited young—er—scamp, and he's no better now."

"He is older, at any rate," I replied, "and when he saw that the girl was foolish enough not to care for him he dropped out, which proves him wise. But I want to tell you how the girl met the young man with the disreputable-looking hands. She was riding a bicycle alone one evening—this was long before automobiles, Miss Jean—and a mile or more from home her rear tire picked up a nail. It was almost dusk at the time and——"

"Don't bother Jean with that old story," interrupted Mrs. Hollister.

"And so she was a little bit frightened, for it was a lonely place," I continued, unheeding. "Fortunately, a strange young man came riding along, and as he could not repair the tire and as she could not or would not ride his

wheel—at least she has always denied——"

"Oh, come, Jack!" said Billy, with a side-glance at his wife, but with a wink at me.

"We accept the denial," I went on. "He walked home with her. But you will note that they had not been introduced. It was a case of love at first sight."

"Beautiful!" said Miss Jean.

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. Hollister.

Billy Hollister shoved the cigar-box across to me as a reward. I lit a cigar with deliberation.

"After which they saw each other frequently. I believe some kind friend performed an *ex post facto* introduction, but I assure you that they did not need it. This young man was a poor struggling chemist, forever experimenting with leads and pigments and so on, and trying to find products and combinations of products of commercial value."

"Like Uncle Billy," commented Miss Jean, looking at me with very wide-open eyes.

"Very like him," I assented, "but much poorer and a great deal thinner, and, of course, very much happier."

Miss Jean's lips formed a round and sympathetic "Oh!" as she looked at Billy, and Mrs. Hollister withered me with a glance.

"His hands were usually covered with paints and oils and chemicals," I said, "and in disgraceful condition. They were, I believe, worse than Mr. Robinson's. Now it happened that the girl's father gave this young man a piece of work to do in the assaying line, and he did it satisfactorily. That brought him more business from the same source. One day the girl and her father were in the young man's laboratory where he was experimenting with some red lead substances. Of course his hands were not clean. The girl was wearing——"

"I don't want Jean to hear the rest of it," said Mrs. Hollister.

"Oh, why not, Aunt Fan?" said Miss Jean.

"She should hear it," I said. "It is a liberal education in itself and conveys

a lesson. I was about to say that the girl wore a white shirt-waist. She was a pretty girl then, wasn't she, Billy?"

"Sure," said Billy, with the easy carelessness of the married man. "You bet your life she was!" he added with sudden fervor, meeting his wife's eye.

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. Hollister again, but in a tone not intended to carry conviction.

"A white shirt-waist," I pursued. "Her father stepped out for a moment to see a man in another office in the same building. He was not absent more than five minutes. The other man came back with him. This other man noticed——"

"I won't have you tell Jean," said Mrs. Hollister. Also she changed color.

"Don't stop, Mr. Graham!" cried Miss Jean.

"Go on, old man," said Billy. "Educate the young. Show 'em there's nothing new under the sun."

"Noticed a peculiar imprint in red upon the shirt-waist," I continued. "It was in the form of a human hand. The palm and the five fingers were plainly outlined, showing that the hand had been placed firmly on the cloth, even that there had been pressure. Its precise location was——"

"Jack Graham, if you tell her I'll forbid you the house!" cried Mrs. Hollister.

"Was in a direct line drawn perpendicularly from the right arm-pit to the waist-line and three inches above the latter the fingers pointing to the front," I said. "Also the girl's hat was slightly out of true. What would you deduce from these phenomena, Miss Jean?"

"How perfectly lovely!" said Miss Jean.

"Yes, but the deduction?" I pressed.

"Why he had—of course—hadn't he, Aunt Fan?"

"Certainly he had," I said. "She

cannot deny it. With more experience you would also deduce from the details I have given a rather small waist or a very long arm. That is how you happen to have an Uncle Billy, Miss Jean."

Billy put his arm around his wife, by way of illustration, as I suppose. Miss Jean clapped her hands and Mrs. Hollister blushed like a school-girl, and I knew that she was now a different Aunt Fan in her niece's eyes.

"Don't wear white shirt-waists, Miss Jean," I cautioned, looking intently at her.

Miss Jean, meeting my eye, cast one horrified downward and backward glance at her immaculate garment, and Billy roared. I laughed. Mrs. Hollister looked grave. Miss Jean, red to the roots of her glossy brown hair, arose and fled.

"By George! And I always thought her such a quiet little kid," said Billy.

"It's serious," said Mrs. Hollister.

"A young machinist! The idea! Billy, you must put a stop to it at once."

"Robinson," said I reflectively. "The Annex! Billy, isn't old Homer Robinson, of Pittsburg, a millionaire?"

"Of course he is," said Billy. "You meant the one in the motor trust—the head of it, in fact. Great Scott! I wonder——"

"The newspapers were full of it a few months ago," I said. "'Plucky Young Robinson. He Starts at the Bottom Rung!' All the usual stuff. Perhaps little Miss Jean knows her own business best."

There was a long pause. Billy, unconsciously perhaps, whistled "If you ain't got no money" in a very low key.

"He did seem to be a bright, modest boy, after all," said Mrs. Hollister, "and certainly he has nice manners."

So much depends on how you look at a thing.



OCTOBER TWENTY-SIXTH

By Lucia Chamberlain

"**T**HERE'S men that have bad luck," said the stationmaster, knocking out the ashes of his pipe against the coal-scuttle, "and as a rule, they're the most onentertaining cusses on the face of the earth. But they was somethin' about Bill Sawyer's luck that made it peculiar and interestin'.

"He wa'n't anything onusual to look at, just a slim, tow-headed yearlin' when he come, ten years ago, to punch cattle on the O. & O. ranches, and the first manifestation we had of his singularity was towards the last of October o' that year, when, ridin' top speed across country, and passin' close behind Degas's place, he got caught under the chin by the Widder Degas's clothes-line, scraped out o' the saddle, and fell on his arm and broke it. Well, it was a thing that might have happened to any young fool, and as he was as smart as ever in a couple o' months, we forgot all about it.

"But along at the end o' next year's round-up, when the last calf was branded, and we made sure that even the bronco-bustin' was done, down come a bunch o' the wickedest-lookin' ponies that ever shook a hoof, an' they was to be broke and ready for herdin' at the end of a week. They come in early in the mornin'. I was foreman then, and I remember goin' to the foot o' the stairs o' the men's house, an' bawlin' up to Bill to hurry, an' him shoutin' back that he was all ready; an' sure enough, he come bustin' out o' the door, right there at the top o' the stairs, an' then—his spur must have caught on a rough board—God knows how it happened—but the next thing I knew

he was crashin' down them stairs, head over heels like a catapult, knocked me off my legs, an' when I picked myself up again, there he lay with his leg broke and his collar-bone broke, an' a fracture of the skull—leastways, that was what the doctor said, when he got up from Flagstaff.

"Bill was onconscious for upwards of a day, an' for nigh onto a week he was too sick to speak a word, but when he begun to come round a little, and sort o' take notice, we boys went up and sat around with him, and said it was a gol-darned shame. Here it was only a year since he'd been hurt afore, an' Hennery Hyde said, 'Yes, by George, it was a year ago this October.' Bill spoke up very weak and said, 'Yes, it was on the twenty-sixth that he'd had his experience with the widder's clothes-line. He remembered, 'cause it was the day he'd broke in the black stallion.' Then Hennery Hyde looked up a calendar, an' 'twas the twenty-sixth that Bill had fallen downstairs!

"Poor Bill was awful took aback. He said it was a sign o' bad luck, but Hennery haw-hawed, an' said it was nothin' but a coincidence. Bill was precious mad, at that, but when he told the doctor, the doctor called it a coincidence, too, an' after Bill found out what a coincidence was, why, he felt better.

"Just the same, he said the cow-punchin' business was a hoodoo for him an' a few months later, when his leg was good again, an' things begun to get active on the ranches, he quit an' took a job as baggageman, down to the Flagstaff station. You couldn't think of a much safer job than that. Hen-

nery Hyde said 'twas cowardly of Bill, but that wasn't right—Bill had never been scared o' danger, and it hadn't been at dangerous times he'd got hurt. It was always when everything looked as safe as a basket o' kittens.

"I didn't see him again for quite some time. They was a lot o' work up to the ranch, an' I was kep' so busy I didn't get a day off all Summer. When finally I had a chance I took a week to spread out in, rounded up a few dollars, and lit for the railroad. As I rode into the Flagstaff depot, the Overland Express was already in, an' there was Bill out on the platform, a-seein' to the boxes the train-hands was pitchin' off. I never see him lookin' so well; he was almost fat. I went up an' slapped him on the back. 'Hello, old pal,' I said, 'how does baggagin' suit you?'

"'Fine!' he said. 'Not such good pay as punchin', but a sight easier; an' then it's pretty lively in town nights. I'm feelin' bully; never was so well in my life!'

"Just as he says that a four-by-four-foot box of iron sheathin's comes spinnin' off the baggage-car an' lights on Bill's left foot. He let out a yell that could have been heard at Grand Cañon, an' laid down an' rolled on the platform.

"'Jim,' I says to the station-agent, 'I kind of lose track of time up there to the ranch, but if my instincts don't deceive me, this here's October twenty-sixth.'

"'That's right,' he said, but looked kind of surprised that I should have stopped to think o' the date, with Bill yellin' to wake the dead.

"'Luckily they was a doctor on the train, an' he come a-runnin' an' give Bill what he called an anesthetic, somethin' that put him to sleep; an' then he poked into his foot, which was smashed flat, an' said gangrene might set in. He was terrible smart an' handy. He tied Bill up, an' wrote out a prescription on the drug-store, an' collected five dollars off'n me, all in fifteen minutes, afore the train pulled out.

"When Bill opened his eyes the first thing he said was, 'What does that cuss of a Hennery Hyde say to his coin-

cidence now?' He was sure right. When a thing like that happens three times runnin', without the slightest warnin' that anything could happen, it's more than chance. I called it Providence. Bill said it looked like the devil to him. But all the same he was kind of tickled at bein' the centre of interest. Everyone was talkin' about it, an' everyone had a different opinion. Hennery Hyde claimed that he'd done it all a-purpose, to make himself interestin'—an' you bet Bill was wild. He said the time hadn't come yet when he'd go droppin' hundred-pound boxes on his feet to please Hennery. But in spite o' the box and in spite o' what the doctor said, his foot got well, an' he kind of chirked up again. You can't expect a man to keep rememberin' all the time that on October twenty-sixth somethin's goin' to happen to him.

"All next Summer he was pretty cheerful, but about September thirtieth he begun to get a worried look, like he was tryin' to figure on what might happen next month. It was extraordinary on the plains, where a man never had an accident, except bein' thrown from a horse, how Bill had managed to have so many of the most unexpected kind, an' we couldn't help feelin' a friendly interest in the next one. By the fifteenth of October everyone, Bill included, had begun to count the days. On the twenty-sixth he wouldn't walk across the track behind the train, an' stood a rod off from the baggage-car. But finally, near sunset, when nothin' had happened, an' he kind of felt the strain was over, he sat down in a wheelbarrow that was standin' on the platform, an' the dog-gone thing opset, an' he fell on his left shoulder, and durned if he didn't bust his arm an' his collarbone.

"I never see anything like that man's unfortunateness! It got to be a sayin' in the country, 'As bad as Bill Sawyer's luck.' Bill was desperate. He said, as far as he could see, the only way o' bein' sure safe was to shut himself up in his house, on the twenty-sixth, an' not put his nose out all day.

"He was livin' in a little old 'dobe shack, down by the depot, an' when the next twenty-sixth come around he got the station-agent to hire a substitute for the day, an' then, havin' previous bought up provisions enough for a week, he shut himself in, an' made the station-agent lock the door an' take away the key, for fear he might be tempted to go outside for a minute, an' so have an accident.

"It was a little stormy that mornin', an' by afternoon an old equinoctial storm, like we hadn't seen for years, was a-rainin' an' a-roarin', the wind increasin' every minute, until by dark it was a regular hurricane, wires down, trains stalled and barns blown into the next lot. At daylight next mornin', when the station-agent managed to get out an' went down to onlock Bill, he found that little 'dobe house flatter'n a pancake. It took 'em two hours to dig Bill out.

"They was no cheerin' of him up, after that. The doctor told him it was a wonder he was alive at all, an' that didn't seem to do him any good. He just said he'd give up, an' was goin' to let nature take its course.

"He give up his job at the depot, too, thinkin' it was too risky, an' took a little shack off in the hills, 'bout half-way between Flagstaff and old man Williamson's ranch. He'd saved some money, an' kept himself goin' by doin' odd jobs for the ranchers around. He'd grown so gol-darned touchy about the October twenty-sixth business that, out o' consideration for his feelin's, we got out o' the habit o' mentionin' it to him or anybody else. It was one of them closed subjects. He got so gloomy an' down in the mouth that I don't know but he might have committed suicide, next October twenty-sixth, if somethin' hadn't happened to distract him.

"It was a girl. Her name was Luella Jones, an' for such a plain, upstandin' name she was the greatest little flirty-jibbet I ever laid eyes on. She was as slim as a willow wand, her hair curled like a pea-vine, an' her eyes were bluer than a hole o' fresh water. She

was the limber kind—an' tireless. She could sweep, and scrub, an' beat up bread all mornin', an' scour round the country on a pinto horse all afternoon, an' be fresh an' ready, come evenin', to ride twenty miles to whatever was goin' on, and dance all night. She come to live with the Williamsons, who were her aunt an' uncle, an' she hadn't been there a week before every boy in town was haulin' out his swell necktie an' brushin' down his hair behind, an' sidlin' off to Williamsons' every chance he got.

"We were all more or less gone on her. Hennery Hyde come clear down from the O. & O. three times that Summer, particular to see her. But Bill Sawyer was clean bowled over from the start. He didn't make no bones about it, nor try to hide it, the way the rest of us did. Not that he talked; he was dumb as an oyster. But when he wasn't at the Williamsons' he used to mope, an' set around his cabin, an' hang around the depot, an' onct, dog-gone if the stationmaster didn't find 'Luella' wrote all over the baggage-truck.

"As for the girl—maybe I haven't mentioned it afore, but girls was apt to take a notion to Bill Sawyer. He wa'n't any better-lookin' than twenty other people. In fact, Hennery Hyde considered himself more than Bill's equal in that respec. But just the same Luella Jones seemed to prefer Bill Sawyer. She didn't show it plain, but it sort o' crep' out in little ways, and kind o' worried the rest of us. She didn't have much chance to see Bill alone, for the Williamsons didn't think the men o' the country was good enough for their relatives, an' the old lady watched over Luella like a dragon—allus went with her to the dances, an' wouldn't let her out of her sight.

"But one evenin' at the ranch—I've never found out to this day how he managed—Bill got five minutes alone with Luella, an' he kissed her. O' course, it wa'n't a nice thing to do—I felt that way myself, and Hennery Hyde was stampin' mad about it. But our feelin's on the subject wa'n't

nothing compared with old lady Williamson's, when she come in and caught 'em.

"She called Bill a low rascal, an' told him not to dasn't to come near her house again; an' old man Williamson emphasized them remarks with some references to a gun, when he saw Bill in town next mornin'.

"You can imagine we were pretty relieved to have Bill out o' the way; but the most encouragin' part o' the business was the way Luella behaved. She was just as chipper an' smilin' as ever, an' she was so special nice to me that I had a sort o' feelin' I was goin' to be the lucky feller, if I could ever persuade her aunt an' uncle to believe my family was great.

"Everything seemed to be swimmin' along fine till one day when he an' Hennery Hyde had come down with a bunch o' hosses to town, an' was standin' inside the grocery-store. We were watchin' Mrs. Williamson an' Luella in the buggy. They'd been buyin', and were just turnin' to drive away, when Bill comes saunterin' down the street mighty casual, like he just happened to be a-passin'. Mrs. Williamson stuck up her chin and pretended not to see him, an' Luella turned her head away, too. But at the same time she slid her hand out on the side where Bill was walkin' an' let drop a little square o' paper. Bill he stooped like he was pickin' up nothin' but a shavin', an' slid the little piece o' paper into his pocket, and it was all I could do to hold Hennery Hyde from goin' out and takin' it away from him.

"When he calmed down a little he said o' course it was Bill who had led Luella on to do it, an' that she was so innocent an' unsuspectin' that if we didn't look out, Bill would get away with her.

"But if you tell old man Williamson, I says, 'Luella'll be so mad she'll never look at us again!'

"Hennery said he wasn't any such a fool. If they was goin' to be any investigatin' done in this business, he'd do it himself. 'It's likely,' he says, 'that Bill will answer that note right

away, an' what we'll do will be to get it. They's only one person could take it out to her, an' that's Tommy Bines, the grocery boy.'

"So we laid for him, outside o' town, about the edge o' the evenin'. He howled a good deal, but we took the note away from him. 'Twas a little piece o' paper folded like a soldier's cap, without any writin' on the outside. Hennery unfolded it.

"Darlin' Luella,' it begun—an' I thought Hennery'd never get any further. I had to take it away from him and read the rest. 'I've made all arrangements. Have the minister ready at Flagstaff at eleven p.m. I'll send the telegram callin' your aunt away just as soon as your uncle's left for Albuquerque, but be sure to get him to go some day that ain't Saturday.'

"Well, Hennery give the note back to the boy, with a dollar and a good scare to keep his mouth shut, an' we rode back to town. Hennery was lookin' kind o' thoughtful. 'What I can't make out,' says he, 'is why Bill took such a special dislike to Saturday.'

"Search me,' I said, 'unless—why—ain't Saturday the twenty-sixth?'

"Jumpin' Jimminy!' he shouts, excited-like, 'I forgot all about October twenty-sixth. Great Jehoshaphat! Why didn't we think o' that afore?'

"I asked him what he meant, but he begun chucklin', mysterious, an' said he'd explain by-an-bye. He was hatchin' of a plot.

"It didn't seem ter me they was much time for plottin', an' all Hennery seemed to be doin' for the next few days was hangin' round the depot every afternoon, at six, when the west-bound train went through. I couldn't think what good that would do us, but on Friday evenin', lo and behold, who should come drivin' into the station but old man Williamson, an' get aboard the train!

"When Hennery see that he dodged right into the depot-house, took a good look at the calendar Jim allus kep' hangin' there, and see that Friday was marked the twenty-fifth.

"'Did a telegram come today for old Mrs. Williamson?' he asked Jim.

"Jim told him he'd just sent one over. At that Hennery fetched a grin, grabbed me by the arm an' run me round to his room in the Last Chance Hotel. Then he rounded up Pete Lovey an' Willie Bright, both o' whom had been prominent in the Luella race. There he told 'em what we'd found out was goin' on between Luella an' Bill on the sly, how they had it fixed up to elope the evenin' old man Williamson went to Albuquerque, an' how he'd gone tonight.

"'Now,' says he, 'we've got 'em as slick as a whistle! Gals don't like to be disappointed. Accordin' to Bill's note, they's a minister expectin' a bridal party at eleven o'clock. All we got to do is to get Bill out o' the way an' Luella'll be free to marry the man she'd really prefer before midnight.' He twisted up the ends of his mustache as he spoke, an' I see Willie Bright give a glance at himself in the lookin'-glass.

"'But,' I says, 'gettin' Bill out o' the way ain't goin' to be so easy as you seem to think.'

"'It'll be just as easy as rollin' off a log,' says Hennery. 'Tomorrow's October twenty-sixth, ain't it? Well, we'll just go to Bill an' persuade him today's the twenty-sixth instead.'

"We just stared, the thing come on us so sudden. Then Willie said, 'He'll have it figgered out too close to be fooled.'

"'Not him. The only thing he's been fingerin' on for the last month is this here elopement,' says Hennery. 'An' once he believes us, we've got him tight. He wouldn't elope on the twenty-sixth if it was his last chance on earth.'

"Well, that proposition sounded reasonable, an' as they wa'n't much time to lose, we all got up and begun to tighten of our belts. Just then we heard a creak outside the door, an' a scuttlin' down the hall to beat the band. Hennery looked out an' see a boy dodgin' round the corner.

"'There's that grocer's boy—that

dod-blasted Tommy Bines,' he says. 'I bet he's heard every word, an' he'll tell the whole thing to Luella! Pete, git your hoss, an' cut 'cross lots, an' hold him up at the long hill below Williamson's. We'll jine you there, by-an'-bye.'

"So we hustled round an' got our slickers an' the ponies, an' inside of an hour we'd sighted the little light o' Bill's cabin off in the hills. Just as we was comin' to it Willie thought he see a boy dodge into the scrub juniper, but we told him he must be dreamin'.

"Bill looked mighty pleasant when he opened the door an' see us.

"'Come in, come in, boys,' he says. He give us tobacco all round, an' we sat down. 'This is an onusual pleasure,' he says.

"'So it is, Bill,' Hennery answers, 'but we thought for the sake of old times we'd drop round to see how you was tonight.'

"'I'm fust-rate,' says Bill, smilin'. 'You ain't heard I was sick, had you?'

"We all looked at Hennery. 'I know, Bill,' he says, 'you don't like to have it spoke of, but we felt kind o' anxious about you today, 'cause it's October twenty-sixth!'

"'No, it ain't,' says Bill, very positive, 'it's the twenty-fifth. I asked 'em down to the store.'

"'They told me that, too,' says Hennery, 'but I went over to make sure by Jim's calendar, an' found out they was a day behind.'

"At that Bill looked awful flabbergasted. He give a glance at the clock that pointed to nine, an' then he sunk down all of a heap in his chair an' says, 'Boys, you don't know how horrible this is! To think,' says Bill, lookin' at Hennery, 'that inside o' three hours something's goin' to happen to me!'

"Hennery nudged me with his foot.

"'Ain't you never thought o' tryin' to avoid it?' he asks.

"For a minute I thought Bill was goin' to hit him, but then he seemed to recollect himself. 'I've tried everything,' he says, very mournful.

"'Why don't you try goin' away?' says Hennery. 'You never had these

same accidents before you come here. It's the place has done it,' says he, slappin' his knee; 'you take my advice, Bill, an' clear right out o' the country.'

"They's a train tonight at 10.30,' says Willie Bright. 'I'll lend you the cash,' I says.

"It's mighty kind o' you to suggest it,' says Bill, 'but I couldn't think o' doin' it! It shall never be said that Bill Sawyer run away from what was comin' to him. It's an awful shock to me to find today's the twenty-sixth, instead o' tomorrow, but I shall face it, an' what's more,' says he, lookin' at Hennery, with a sort of a grin, 'I sha'n't alter any o' my plans on account of it.'

"Hennery's jaw dropped about a yard. It had never struck us that Bill would be so desperate as to go on in spite of everything. We tried to talk him round, but there wa'n't no movin' him an inch. He seemed all broke up, an' told Hennery he'd done him a turn he never would forget, but he said he was goin' to stick by his guns, an' finally we had to leave.

"When we got outside we asked Hennery what in hell he was goin' to do about it now. 'What we'll do,' says Hennery, very distinct an' slow, 'is to git up to Luella's as fast as we can hustle, an' when we git there, why, you do what I do, an' follow your leader, an' we'll all come out square.'

"So we put off for Williamson's as fast as the ponies could hoof it. At the foot o' the long hill we found Pete waitin', awful mad, an' cold, not havin' seen hide nor hair o' Tommy Bines. We were afraid he'd got to Luella's in spite of us. We went kind o' cautious, when we got up on the hill, 'cause they'd been quarryin' there, an' the road ran pretty close to the edge o' the quarry.

"Hennery knocked very soft on the door. Luella opened it, dimplin' an' lookin' sweeter'n sugar. But when she seen who it was her face changed, an' for a minute she looked scared enough to jump out the window. Then she pulled herself together an' asked us to come in an' set down. She had her hood an' coat on, an' there she sat,

with one eye on the door, an' the color flyin' in an' out of her cheeks. I see plain enough that Tommy Bines hadn't got there. She was all took by surprise.

"We been down cheerin' up poor Bill,' says Hennery, conversational-like.

"What does he need cheerin' up about?' Luella speaks up, rather sharp.

"Why, don't you know?' Hennery pretended to be surprised. 'Today's the twenty-sixth.'

"That so?' Luella answered. Just like most women, hadn't any more idee o' time nor a kitten. 'What's that got to do with Bill?'

"Then Hennery hitched up his chair an' out with the whole story o' Bill's peculiar series o' misfortunes. Her eyes kep' gettin' bigger an' more astonished. An' when he'd done she just laughed an' said she guessed he was foolin'.

"Well,' says Hennery, pretendin' to be embarrassed, 'course I never would have mentioned it, if I hadn't thought you knew; I thought Bill had told you.'

"She got mighty red at that. 'He never did,' she said, 'an' I don't believe it's true!'

"Why should I say so, if it wa'n't?' says Hennery, very innocent. 'It ain't been talked about much, 'cause Bill's so blamed touchy over it. He broods on it all the time.'

"I reckon that's the reason he never married,' says Willie Bright, 'for fear his wife might get mixed up in one of his annual accidents.'

"Are—are they always—very bad ones?' says Luella, in a tremblin' voice.

"Hennery answered, very solemn, 'Last time his house fell on him!'

"As he says this they was a knock at the door.

"Come!' Luella says, in a weak little voice. An' in walked Bill, all out o' breath, an' steamin' with his hurry.

"He kind of stopped and looked round at us. 'I'm sorry to interrupt you,' he says, glancin' behind him at

the door, 'but I have an appointment with this young lady.'

"We looked at Luella. She riz up kind of shaky. 'Bill,' she says, 'Mr. Hyde's been tellin' me a yarn about you an' October twenty-sixth.'

"'Oh,' says Bill, glarin' at us. 'That's the meanin' o' this mass-meetin'!'

"'It ain't true, is it, Bill?' Luella asked.

"'It's true enough,' Bill answers.

"She drew back a step. 'Then why didn't you tell me yourself?' she says, and I could see she was gettin' her back up.

"'I know I ought to have,' said Bill, kind of dogged. 'I meant to have, but somehow I just couldn't. I was so afraid you'd be scared, Luella, an' throw me down.'

"'Well, that's what I'm goin' to do now,' she answered cold-like.

"'I knew it,' says Bill, very bitter. 'Women ain't got no gumption at all! Why, it's only once a year.'

"'But it's tonight,' says Luella, half cryin'.

"'It ain't,' says Bill.

"'I don't believe you,' she says. 'You've deceived me before, an' you're tryin' to do it again!'

"'All right,' says Bill, 'I'll face it alone. I hope you never see me again!'

"'I hope I never will!' says she. An' holdin' his head up high he marched out o' the door.

"After he was gone Hennery begun to explain to Luella his idee about her an' the minister who was waitin' at Flagstaff. At first she didn't understand what he was drivin' at, but when she did you bet she was madder at Hennery than she'd been at Bill.

"'I wouldn't take you for a thousand dollars,' she says. 'If I don't marry Bill, I don't marry nobody!' An' she bust out cryin'.

"That was the most oncomfortable minute I ever spent in my life. There was Luella a-bellerin', an' us all lookin' at Hennery, an' Hennery lookin' like the original thirty cents. In the midst of it, all of a sudden, outside, we heard

a yell, a crackin' an' rollin' of rocks, an' then an awful deep groan.

"'What's that?' says Hennery, starin' as if his eyes would drop out of his head.

"'It's Bill!' says Willie, in a awe-struck voice.

"'He's fallen down the quarry!' Luella shrieks.

"We all rushed outside. They was a lot o' earth an' loose stones had slid away from the quarry edge, an' 'way down at the foot we could just make out Bill. It was hard work gittin' down through the loose dirt, an' Hennery kep' hangin' onto my elbow all the way.

"'You don't suppose it was our sayin' it was the twenty-sixth that made it happen?' he whispers to me, with his teeth chatterin'.

"'I dunno,' I answers, 'but it's a ticklish job monkeyin' with things you don't understand.' An' then we come to where Bill was layin', all doubled up among the rocks, with Luella, who had beat us all gettin' down, kneelin' beside him. We had to give him all the whisky in Hennery's flask afore he opened his eyes.

"'Can you tell us where you're hurt, ol' pal?' I asks.

"'I dunno as I can, *just* where,' he says feeble, 'but I feel numb all over, an' I can't move hand or foot.'

"'My God, he's paralyzed,' says Hennery.

"'Oh, Bill,' Luella says, cryin' like a waterfall, 'I wish I'd been hurt with you! I didn't mean a word o' what I said. I was just so mad you hadn't told me!'

"Bill smiles at her, kinder weak, an' says, 'If that's the case, Luella, maybe you'll be willin' to come down ter Flagstaff and see me die.'

"Hennery was for bringin' Bill up to the house. He said it would be most as quick to fetch a doctor up there, besides savin' all the trouble of gettin' Bill down. But Bill said he was dyin', an' this was his last wish; an' Luella said we'd got ter foller it out. So the end of it was we histed him up, lashed a rawhide across the backs o'

two o' the hosses, an' loaded him on, and started fer Flagstaff.

"Jerusalem! I'll never forget it! That was the worst trip I ever made. It was a sharp night. We couldn't go fast enough to keep warm, an' what with Bill urg'in' us one moment to hurry, because he was dyin' an' the next to slow up because the joltin' was half killin' him, we near went wild. He groaned awful. 'Bout every five minutes we'd have to get down to tighten up the dad-blamed rawhides or give him a drink or because Luella wanted to ask him how he felt now. An' when we was within a mile o' Flagstaff he said he couldn't stand the motion o' the hosses any longer, an' nothing would do but what we must carry him.

"At first Hennery wouldn't, but Bill said Hennery'd be responsible for a death if he wa'n't careful, so he give in. I took the head o' the rawhide an' Hennery the feet, an' with Luella walkin' alongside of us and Willie followin' behind with the hosses, we come into Flagstaff.

"We didn't go in by the main street, though; we crep' around very quiet by the outskirts. We passed close to the minister's house on the way, an' Bill spoke up an' said he wanted to be took there. He said he had a confession he wanted to make afore he passed into a new life. As we come up the yard we see the front door open an' the minister standin' there, the light shinin' behind him.

"That you, Sawyer?' he says.

"It's Bill, all right,' we answered in a kind of mournful chorus. We laid the stretcher down at the foot of the steps an' just was goin' to lift him off when he riz up himself very slow an' deliberate, stood up perfectly straight, give himself a kind of a shake all over, offered his arm to Luella, an' led her, all in a daze, up the steps to where the minister stood.

"Yes, here we are, parson,' he says, in a loud, hearty voice. 'Sorry to have kep' you waitin'!

"Well, Hennery Hyde an' me an' Willie Bright stood there with our

arms as limp as dish-rags, starin' as if we couldn't believe our eyes.

"What are you doin'?' says Hennery at last. 'I thought you couldn't move hand nor foot!'

"Well,' says Bill, grinnin' at him, 'now you know better!'

"D'you mean to tell me,' says Hennery, in a quiverin' voice, 'that they's been nothin' the matter with you all along?'

"You're guessin' pretty good,' says Bill. 'All I needed was a little help to counterack the influence of October twenty-sixth.'

"I seen Hennery's jaw movin' rapid, like he was talkin' to himself, an' I guess he was rememberin' how Bill had drunk his whisky, an' how he'd carried him for a mile, an' had finally brought him to the minister's, spang where he was aimin' to be. Then Hennery bust out, but he was so chokin' with rage that luckily the minister couldn't make out all the words he was sayin', an' while he was shakin' his fist at Bill, 'Hold on!' the minister calls out, 'come here up, two of you; we've got to have witnesses!'

"Between 'em, him an' Bill corraled us, an' herded us into the minister's study, where poor Luella was waitin'. When we were all inside, 'Luella,' says Bill, turnin' to her, 'we've all deceived you, but I'm hopin' you'll forgive me. The whole thing was a put-up job, by our friend, here!' an' he pointed to Hennery. 'Tommy Bines give it away to me. I was afraid they'd be up to something more, so I went for you as fast as I could put, but they got there first. An' when I found that they'd cut into my game I just went outside an' I rolled down the quarry a-purpose, 'cause I thought if you thought the worst was over you'd be willin' to marry me. Now this is October twenty-fifth, an' if you still don't want to marry me, you can say so.'

"I'd marry you just the same if it was the twenty-sixth,' she said, blushin' an' cryin' both at once.

"Why it is the twenty-sixth,' says the minister, lookin' puzzled.

"'What!' shouts Bill, an' he actually turned pale.

"The minister picks up a little fancy calendar off his desk and hands it to us, an' there's 'Friday, October 26th,' wrote out as plain as the nose on your face.

"'I'm afraid you've been goin' by that calendar at the depot—that's last year's,' says the minister.

"Bill give one wild look at the clock, an' she stood five minutes to midnight. Then he turns on us with the triumphantest grin you ever saw.

"'October twenty-sixth has come and gone,' says he, 'an' they ain't no accident come to Bill Sawyer!'

"At that Hennery give a kind of

sneerin' snicker. What d'you call gittin' married?' says he.

"Bill looked at Hennery, an' then at Luella, in a scared sort o' way. 'Hold on a minute, minister,' says he. 'It ain't that I don't trust you, Luella, my girl,' he says, 'but Providence is sometimes too much for us. Would you mind waitin' five minutes?'

"Luella was agreeable. So there we stood in solemn silence, all lookin' at the clock, an' when she finished the last stroke o' twelve the minister opened his book an' married 'em up tight.

"An' I ain't heard that Bill's had any trouble since."



THE WAY OF THE WINDS

By Charlotte Becker

THE Wind of Spring blew softly
 Into Love's lonely room,
 And left, to give him comfort,
 A bough of budded bloom.

And, as the Wind of Summer
 Came dancing by Love's door,
 He opened wide each petal
 And bared its fragrant lore.

But when the Wind of Autumn
 Stole sadly through the eaves,
 He changed the glowing blossoms
 To dull and withered leaves.

The grim old Wind of Winter
 Swept even these away;
 Yet, beggared of his treasure
 Love knows no weary day,

Since all the sunbeams whisper
 That, with the April rain,
 The Wind of Spring shall bring him
 A budded bough again.

THE MASTERPIECE

By Edward Cummings

IT was one of those Spring days when the value of all appreciable things seemed indefinitely enhanced, and to the shopkeeper under Mr. Norfleet's studio there came from the shining green trees of the parks, and from the dashing equipages that rolled by, a brave medley of suggestions—youth, high spirits, riches, gaiety. But to Mr. Norfleet no such happy intimations were borne. He sat above in his studio, with the door locked, painting with passionless care and unenthusiastic skill upon an uninteresting portrait, and the day was no better than other days, except that the light was good. People came and knocked, and waited, and knocked again, and departed, some bearing bills. Mr. Norfleet sighed wearily and yawned.

He was a long man, with long fingers and long hair—a whimsical, melancholy, kindly man, much past thirty, who felt that his life was spoiling on his hands. This was, he argued to himself, chiefly because he had not the time to do the things he wanted to do.

There came a gentle rap which he knew, and he admitted Miss Langley, one of his pupils.

"You will have to work alone this afternoon," he said. "I am trying to finish up a wretched daub of a portrait."

"Why do you continue to do those things?" asked the girl.

"Because he ordered it, and will pay for it," he answered.

"How much?"

"One hundred dollars."

"And do you need the hundred dollars, or any multiple of a hundred

dollars, so badly as to have to do them when you don't want to?"

"Damnably, my dear child," he said gravely. "My pot must boil."

The girl looked at his canvas. "It is the work of an artist, and it has style," she said judicially. "But it is stiff, and flattering, and——"

"Rotten," said Mr. Norfleet conclusively.

"True, it is not worthy of you."

"I should say not," said Mr. Norfleet, with the little shrug which he had unconsciously preserved through all the weary years since the Latin Quarter days.

Miss Langley sat for a moment regarding the painter thoughtfully. She knew him for a man gifted and original, splendidly trained, a master of the technique of his craft; and yet somehow he seemed to be drifting into the shadows of ultimate failure, and she felt very sorry for him. Mr. Norfleet turned and caught her eye as she sat thinking upon this, and they smiled at each other pleasantly, and he shrugged his shoulders again. Then she went placidly to work. She did not expect to be a great painter; she was consciously, happily and forever an amateur.

To have Alice Langley for his pupil was one of the few satisfactory things in Mr. Norfleet's life. She was more than a pupil, she was a friend, a protégée, a model; she sat for him, delighting to pose for him over and over again, to listen to his talk, and admire, to quote him speciously in all circles as one who spoke with authority on all subjects, esthetic or sublunary; and it was she who had given him some

vogue as a painter of portraits. She was the most intimate and the most interesting of his women friends, and he frequently played at being in love with her. He knew very well, however, that in time and the nature of things she would marry one of her own kind. This was the very rich kind, and Mr. Norfleet did not belong. To him she was simply a delightful companion, a bright talker, of the grave-gay sort, full of herself and life, and she threw out no hint of the business woman in the way she took her own great wealth into her own hands and managed it most capably according to her own sweet will.

"I'd like to talk to you about some of my own troubles," she said, after painting a while in silence. "I want your advice."

"I am notoriously liberal with that," said Mr. Norfleet.

"Your advice is never anything but good advice—never," she declared, stopping her work and looking out of the window over the throbbing and shimmering city. She was fair and fragile, with a very delicate complexion, very earnest blue eyes and a manner habitually tranquil. "You are one of the few friends I have upon whose advice I can really rely—first, because it is always good, and second, because it is always disinterested. I know plenty of shrewd people with whom I might consult, but—oh, I don't know—there are some nasty features about—well——"

"About being rich," he supplied.

"Yes," she assented. "And in this matter—which may not seem important to you at all, but that's no matter, it is to me—I wish the opinion of a man of feeling who can deliver a cool judgment upon a matter of sentiment. You have splendid judgment, Louis; I have often wondered why a man of your quick discernment and native shrewdness couldn't achieve more—couldn't 'do things,' in a business way, like—well, like that man there, whose portrait you are painting."

"Julian Tawney? 'Do things' like him? God forbid!" growled the painter.

"I don't know," said Miss Langley stubbornly, in her even way. "I like to see a man able to make money. I think every man should make money. You may call it Philistinism if you will, but I cannot build any ideal of a strong man who isn't a captain of men and of means, a master of the great works of the earth, wielding power."

"You surprise me," he said. "Really, have you never learned that most of the great things of the world are done by the men in the background, in patience and hardship and obscurity? And I didn't know you were such an admirer of Julian Tawney, either!" he added.

"Well, Mr. Tawney is an excellent business man. You must admit that!"

"Yes, a fine business man," said he, not without heat and bitterness. "Wherever and whenever his name is mentioned that fact is almost sure to be remarked, as though it were a patent of nobility. It suggests more than mere capability and achievement; it connotes something by which the world is bettered and the people lifted. There may be something ignominious in my dulness, but I can't see at all how any good can come to anybody by reason of Mr. Julian Tawney being such a fine business man!"

Miss Langley laughed agreeably. "We shall fall into argument presently, and we mustn't, ever, you and I. Argument muddies the well of truth. The matter I wished to speak of happens to concern Mr. Tawney, or rather he is concerned," she went on, scraping a daub of paint from her apron with her palette-knife. "He has made me a proposition to buy the Alice Langley mine—the old mine, you know. The mine is quite worthless to me as it is, and I am unwilling to spend any more money on it. I don't think it is worth anything at all. And yet, I dislike to sell it. Father named it after me because he considered it his greatest strike. He thought more of it than he did of all the other claims—the ones which made him rich. He said it would be the greatest producer of all. It did yield enormously for a short

while, then it suddenly played out. It was simply an isolated ore-body, and was quickly exhausted. All the money that it yielded was expended in further shafting, but nothing came of it. Poor old daddy!" she broke off. "Poor, dear, greasy old prospector! simple, brave old Argonaut! How he did strive for wealth—and it was all for me! That time when he located the Alice Langley claim he fought all night with the murderous Apaches there among the rocks and greasewood bushes; he was the first man who dared to prospect there in their stronghold—out in those horrible desert hills. Oh, he was a man, Louis!"

"He went after money," said Mr. Norfleet, "but it was clean money. Gold out of the ground robs nobody."

"Yes," said Miss Langley, "and that is why I am in a quandary. I don't like to sell the mine, for reasons of many kinds, but particularly because he named it for me. And yet it doesn't seem right to reject this offer; it is poor husbandry of the wealth he was at such pains to leave me. I ought to do the best I can with it."

Mr. Norfleet smiled over the perplexities of the thrifty rich.

"Why does Tawney wish to buy it?" he asked.

"For the tailings. There is a great quantity of discarded ore, and they have a process of treatment which they think will pay very well."

"Well, it isn't a matter for a snap-judgment," said Mr. Norfleet, after a few moments of smiling reflection. "Heavens! I wish I had such problems of my own! Suppose, since we are going sketching shortly, we wait and consider the matter in the open air?"

"Oh, very good!—that will be fine," said she. "Then I'd just as well go after the drag, and my traps and wraps. What are you going to sketch?"

"Some work for my background—cities and spires in the distance under the sunset."

"Oh, are you working on something really good?"

He paused a moment. "Yes, it is good," he said.

"And you never told me! What is it?"

"A religious picture, strange to say—'The Temptation of the Master'—I'll show it to you when you come back. Come at four. I have a sitter at three-thirty."

Miss Langley departed humming a little tune.

Mr. Julian Tawney's rap at the door was imperious and unmistakable. He said he would not have time for a sitting. "I came to talk a little business," he said.

"With me?" asked Mr. Norfleet, in surprise.

"With you," said Mr. Tawney, smiling graciously and tossing his coat upon a chair.

A stylish, weighty and distinguished gentleman was Mr. Julian Tawney, being portly, paunchy and elegantly groomed—a florid and Roman-nosed gentleman, with heavy-lidded eyes which slanted excessively and had deep pouches under them; a formidable, compelling, benignant gentleman, with a winning smile upon his shaven face, and in his heart something of the instinct of the birds and beasts of prey.

"Sit down," said Mr. Norfleet.

Mr. Tawney sat. "It is a matter worth more to you and me than all the pictures you ever painted or ever will paint."

"Speak for yourself," said the painter.

"Norfleet," said the other, "this is vital."

Mr. Norfleet turned and looked at him squarely, and discovered that the man was nervous.

"Well, Tawney?"

"Miss Langley may have told you about it. We want to buy the Alice Langley."

"Well, Tawney?"

"Well, it's this way," said Mr. Tawney, suppressing the manifestation of whatever irritation he may have felt, for Mr. Norfleet's tone was deliberately flippant and patronizing. "We are right anxious to buy the mine. If managed right it will prove a paying thing. Er—" Mr. Tawney was com-

pelled to have recourse to his cigar-case. "Smoke? No? You see, in the old days they didn't care about low-grade ore, and they threw aside a lot of stuff——"

"All right, I know about that," interrupted the painter. "But what have I got to do with it?"

The financier paused to light his cigar. "Miss Langley is withheld solely by sentimental considerations from parting with the property. Now, I understand—indeed I am fully satisfied—that you have a great deal of influence with her; you are her intellectual adviser, her fidus Achates, her Admirable Crichton, all rolled into one—it is common talk at the club. It occurred to me it would be a nice thing for all concerned if you would use this influence in the right direction. The mine is standing idle, and the resumption of work there would give employment to a lot of people; it would be money in Miss Langley's pocket, and it would be a help to me and my associates."

"In other words," said Mr. Norfleet, running his fingers through his hair and yawning, "you urge on me a work of philanthropy."

"In a sense, yes," said Mr. Tawney genially, yet doubtfully; he felt that he was on the wrong side of the man. "But, of course, philanthropy is not my sole motive, by any means; I wouldn't like to have you think I pretended that. I'll tell you frankly, Norfleet——" Mr. Tawney approached the essential point slowly and softly, as a steamer draws up to the dock, with many puffs of smoke—"I'll put it squarely because I am a business man and do nothing without good business reasons and I know it would be futile to ask you to exert yourself on my behalf in a purely business matter unless it is to your interest to do so. It will be an excellent investment for us if correctly handled, and of course"—puff—"if you are of practical service"—puff—"in putting the deal through"—puff—"you will of course be taken care of." A very large puff.

"You are buying the mine simply

for the tailings?" asked Mr. Norfleet suddenly.

"That's all," said Mr. Tawney, talking with his cigar in his teeth and gazing at the wall. "We figure on putting up a little modern cyanide plant for the treatment of the ore. The vein is lost, or rather there never was any vein. The ore-body is used up. It's a dead mine. Ran out, years ago." He repeated after a moment, "A dead mine."

With the swiftness of a shock there entered Mr. Norfleet's brain—which was anything but a dull brain—the inspiring persuasion that such was not the case. He knew little of mining, and cared less, but he knew a great deal about human nature and the springs and motives of mankind. Mr. Tawney was not a dabbler in small ventures. He was a stalker of big game only. And why did this man of millions stand in such imperative need of a few thousand tons of rejected ore? The painter was himself obliged to ask help of tobacco; he prepared a pipe, and as he did so he prepared a remark which, as he sought for a match, he presently delivered.

"You are lying about that, you know."

Mr. Tawney flicked the ashes from his cigar and turned his slanting eyes upon the painter steadily. But in spite of his coolness, he had to lick his lips and clear his throat before replying, "What do you mean?"

Mr. Norfleet laughed pleasantly.

"You have had a mining expert at work on that old claim," he said, blowing a cloud of smoke into the air. "He wasn't busy with old dumps, either." Another cloud of smoke. "You have located the vein again." More clouds. "And the price you have offered Miss Langley isn't the faintest fractional part of the value of the property." This last remark was blown with a very great cloud of smoke rather insolently in the other's face.

Mr. Tawney laughed boisterously. "For a fantastic dreamer, commend me to an artist," he said. "But I might have known."

"Do you deny it?" asked Mr. Norfleet shortly.

"Why, most certainly."

"Then," said Mr. Norfleet, "we will let the matter drop." He rose and strolled about the room, his pipe in his mouth; presently he sat down at his canvas. "I say, Tawney, suppose we have a sitting now? I think I can finish this thing up at another crack."

Mr. Tawney paid no attention to the remark. Over his face a slight but distinct change had come; the slanting eyes were uneasy and restless, the pouches under them became congested, and the man smoked with a laborious affectation of ease.

Mr. Norfleet drew a quiet breath of pleasure. This was a great business man, and this was one of the ways he "did things," and he had caught him, it appeared, on the nail! He had a nervous, unquiet sense of pleasurable triumph; it was delicious to the man who had never jousting on such fields.

"You are talking nonsense," said Mr. Tawney brusquely. "And I came here to talk business."

"Talk," said Mr. Norfleet.

Mr. Tawney went to the window and chewed his cigar. "I'll give you," he said, in the most casual of tones, after a period of reflection, "I'll give you ten thousand dollars if you will secure this sale."

"Too little," said the painter gravely.

"I'll say fifty thousand," said Mr. Tawney as casually as before.

"Really," said Mr. Norfleet, "is this the way business men do business?"

"It's one way," said Mr. Tawney.

"Look here, Norfleet, I see you are bull-headed, but I know you are no fool. Hang it!" he cried out, giving way to irritation, "every man has his price!"

The remark was instantly regretted, not because the speaker did not believe it to be true, but because he realized that it was not a happy speech; it did not sound good. He was too wise, however, to attempt to amend it; Mr. Norfleet did not appear to notice it, and the financier went on hurriedly: "It is all gain to her, and good business for us,

and it happens that we can afford to let you in on it."

"Why don't you offer her a larger price?"

"It is not a question of price with her, and besides, she would scent something, and that would upset the whole business."

"It is more than a scent," said Mr. Norfleet. "Positively, Tawney, it smells."

"Look here, Norfleet, here is this mine lying idle out there, producing nothing but taxes, and we offer good spot cash for it: Miss Langley gets a considerable addition to her already extensive bank account, and you get a lot of money for just a word. What I can't see is why you hesitate a moment."

"What is your best figure?" asked the painter hoarsely. He had a curious feeling that it was not he who spoke; that someone else had asked the question.

The speculator was eying him narrowly, watching the lines about his mouth. "I came here with my mind made up as to how much we could let you have," he said. "I'll make it an even hundred thousand dollars." The voice seemed to come from very far off.

Mr. Norfleet winced. "The devil take you, Tawney!" he cried out.

Mr. Tawney went to a table, produced a cheque-book and fountain pen, and wrote.

"When do you expect to see Miss Langley again?"

"This afternoon."

"My, my! The golden chance! Here—put this in your pocket."

It was a cheque for a hundred thousand dollars.

"You can cash that at any bank where you are known; my signature is known at all the banks in town. The banks are closed now," continued Mr. Tawney, looking at his watch, "but if you prefer the cold cash I can get it for you in twenty minutes."

"Every man has his price, eh?" said Mr. Norfleet. "And mine, it seems, is a hundred thousand dollars. Really,

in my dreaming hours, I should have thought it more!"

"Ah, it isn't a price at all!" said Mr. Tawney. "We are letting you in on a good business proposition, and that is all we can afford to let you have."

"But where do you come in? Unless you stop the payment of this cheque, how are you protected?"

"Protected? My dear fellow, who talks of protection between gentlemen? You are to return that cheque to me by this verbal agreement if you fail to secure the sale. That is all there is to it."

"It is not honest," said Mr. Norfleet.

"Not honest?" cried Mr. Tawney.

"Good heavens, man! It is a legitimate piece of business. That is the way all big business is done, by seeking out and making good your advantages. I wouldn't ask you to do a dishonest thing, and you know it. I am relying on your honesty altogether. I wouldn't trust such a sum in the hands of a man whom I thought capable of doing a dishonest thing. You are in a position of powerful advantage, you can be of great assistance to us, and it is only fair for us to divide up. That's all. It's business, Norfleet, business!"

The slip of pink paper with its red and black lettering, and the large figures spelled boldly across its face, was trembling in the painter's hands. One hundred thousand dollars! It was a small sum to Julian Tawney; to Louis Norfleet, the debt-ridden painter, it was a princely estate. It meant a princely thing, which was liberty. Liberty!—which was to say, immunity to the need of toiling merely for a livelihood, escape from the sordor and drudgery, a chance to do the things, the fine things, that he felt he could do, and wanted to do, heaven knew how much—license to leap from the treadmill and follow the open road! And his in all honesty, Tawney had said; and Tawney stood well, and people did him reverence—even Alice!

A hundred thousand dollars!

"It's a fair deal, Norfleet," said Mr. Tawney. "A gorgeous opportunity to knock at any man's door. And oppor-

tunity, you know, knocks but once. I suppose there is no doubt of your ability to put the thing through?"

"None whatever," said Mr. Norfleet.

There was a light rapping at the outer door of the studio.

"Who is that?" queried Mr. Tawney nervously.

"Opportunity, I think," said Mr. Norfleet, "in the person of Miss Alice Langley."

Mr. Tawney caught up his coat. "Don't let her see me here; it will undo us! Show me a way out."

"Here!—this way!" Norfleet fairly ran, the other at his heels. The way was through a small skylighted room hung with pictures, and out upon a corridor from which a narrow stairway gave upon the alley. It was only when he found himself running that Mr. Norfleet realized that he was committing himself to the scheme. Mr. Tawney grasped his arm at parting. "Play your cards well, and she will never know the difference!" he said, and vanished down the alley.

The artist's temples were throbbing as he climbed back up the stair. A hundred thousand dollars! He had withstood easily the smaller waves of the man's advances, but this rolling great figure lifted him from his feet, and took his breath. He knew the value of money—none better, for the luxuries of other men were his necessities. He paused at the top of the stair and ran his hand nervously through his hair. Oh, how good it would be!—to be quit forever of uncongenial labor, to steep himself in the rich atmosphere of unadulterated art—and Paris—and Barbizon—and Rome again, please God! And all for a few words, fairly and cleverly spoken, and no one need know—he was an artist—he knew how it could be done.

His forehead was beaded, he was trembling in every limb; he bit his finger-nails, and felt very short of breath.

He went on through the inner studio, a sanctuary to which his friends and pupils were seldom admitted. He moved slowly to regain his composure,

and he ran over in his mind the many excellent ways in which the subject could be handled. Perhaps she would resume it herself, in which case it would be very simple. The girl was rich—vulgarily rich—

His progress was impeded and every movement of mind and muscle suddenly arrested by a large unfinished canvas.

Virtually, the work was complete. Low in the foreground was the plausible, half-elusive face of the Devil, playing upon the powerful central figure of the Master. In the background, which represented illimitable depth and distance, among infinite clouds and splendor, shone the palaces and spires of the Cities of the Earth, and the whole picture, rioting in color, was keyed to an exquisite glorious light.

He had given little thought to the ethical part of his painting. He had wrought in the love of art for art's sake, which is the way of the true craftsman, who conceives the highest ethical ends are served in the fulfillment of esthetic ideals and the worship of beauty. His Master was no classic ideal, but an expressive study of a powerful genius, strongly featured, even ruggedly lined, and bearing the supernal stamp of character which is

shared, if in less degree, by other, if lesser Reformers—the face of a dear friend and comrade, startled into beautiful anger and glowing with contempt.

"And with my own hands I painted it!" he murmured; a great fortitude ran through him; out of that perfection of art the courage of the Nazarene challenged and possessed him swiftly and subtly; he stood once more at his ease in the character of a gentleman, and thrilling and thrilling as with chord upon chord of music, in the ecstatic realization of splendid artistic achievement. "With my own hands—my own creation—and it speaks to me—it speaks to me! *Gott sei dank!* I am a painter!"

"Oh," cried Miss Langley, when she was finally admitted, "you look as if you had a fine idea!"

"I have!" he replied gaily; "also, some news for you. But come in here and have a look at my masterpiece."

"Your masterpiece? I didn't know you had painted one, Louis, or ever would!"

Mr. Norfleet tossed a crumpled slip of paper into the fire, and smiled, as he watched it change from pink to black.

"No more did I," said he.



THE BLUE BEYOND

By Archibald Sullivan

I HAD a rose-bush, and it died
Just at the opening of the Spring;
I had a bird—it flew away
Before it had quite learned to sing.

They tell me, in the blue beyond
I'll find them waiting there for me—
The rose-bush full of scarlet buds,
The bird, a-singing on a tree.

JUNE MAGIC

By Eleanora Robertson

MY wife is an awfully decent sort. We have been married six years and we are still the best of friends. She writes things and I paint things, so that we live pretty much in each other's arms all the year round, for she has her writing-table and I have my easel in the same room. We haven't any children, but we're going to have some day when we are not so awfully busy being happy with just our two selves. You see, we have hardly even begun yet to exhaust all the possibilities for happiness that we find just in each other. And so we have had only our two selves to really live with, and because we understand each other first rate we know that it is a good thing for us to be separated a while at least once a year; so that is why we always take our holidays away from each other. And I tell you, the times that we find life is really worth living are the times when we come back to each other again.

We never confide where we are going, or correspond, or have any dealings with each other whatever any more than if we were perfect strangers. It was rather funny once. We happened to get on the same train when we started out for our holidays, sat right across the aisle from each other, and never spoke during a two hours' ride. But that only happened once, and the world is big, so we manage as a rule to lose each other pretty successfully. And after we get back home again we never ask where we have been or what we have done, though usually it all comes out during the year, and we have lots of fun talking it over and relating our adventures; but it is never demanded on either side.

Now, it so happened that I knew a little place on the Canadian shore of Lake Erie where I had once spent a Summer when I was a boy, with some Canadian cousins who lived on a farm about a mile back from the lake; and every Summer since my marriage, when planning my grass-widower holidays, I had promised myself that I would go there again, but year after year something had occurred to prevent me from doing so, until at last this Summer I accomplished it. And here it was at Brandon Heights that I fell into the only flirtation of which I had ever been guilty since I became a married man.

The Heights is an ideal place for a lazy holiday. You don't have to do anything there, because there is nothing there to do. The only thing that is not dead about it is its natural beauty. That will always be there, but as a Summer resort its popularity has come and gone. Why? For no other reason in the world than that of the fickleness of mankind, to say nothing of woman-kind. Its rival flourishes a few miles farther down the shore to the music of the electric-car gongs, the merry-go-rounds and the tom-tom of the wild-animal side-show, while at deserted Brandon Heights the big white hotel on the hill stands an empty monument of its former glories; the Summer cottages have taken to themselves wheels and trundled away, and the once busy little village at the foot of the Heights sleeps the dignified sleep of the virtuous dead.

But the front door of the big, white, green-shuttered hotel on the Heights stands open all the Summer long for the shelter and comfort of the very few who know a good thing when they see it.

And the bliss of the whole thing now was, that I was to have that big house all to myself during the whole blessed month of June. There would probably be a few guests during July and August, for the Canadian Summer-resort season does not begin until nearly the middle of July, but the proprietor and his family enjoyed this big Summer home from the beginning of May. So they were the only people in the house besides myself, and they did not count except as the guardians of my physical comfort and well-being. And thus I roamed the Heights over, and all the countryside around, monarch of all I surveyed: the orchard and the strawberry patch in the rear of the house, and farther back the beautiful rolling country and clusters of thickly-wooded forest; the beach with its endless stretch from east to west, and back to the Heights again over the smooth green lawn cut in the shape of a huge disk in front of the hotel, and encircled by a broad, clean-kept gravel walk, with a tall flag-pole in the centre of the disk which flung proudly to the land and lake breezes the huge folds of the Canadian flag; while above the vine-covered arbor which was perched on the Point overlooking the lake there floated a diminutive Stars and Stripes, a solitary, silent reminder of the days when big steamers brought across the lake to the cooler air and tonic breezes of the north shore gay American pleasure-seekers in jolly bunches that filled the house with the sounds of music and revelry day and night, all the Summer through; while from the city half a hundred miles to the north, which was then a British garrison town, there came the more sober-appearing but none the less ready Britishers to add the dash and picturesqueness of their military atmosphere to the scene. But though the brave little flag still waved its beckoning folds to its far-away mother-shore, none came to do it homage, and no less none came to do it despite. And now it seemed to have become as established a feature of these Canadian Heights as the big

Canadian flag itself, and it was treated with the same respect.

In the mornings I lived very close to Nature's heart, oftenest perhaps in the Lover's Lane, a delightful avenue of tall poplars on the high bank overlooking the lake to the right of the lawn, and fenced in by itself with many benches and rustic seats, and the blessed warm earth itself to lounge upon, with the whispering, quivering, white-lined leaves of the poplars above me, and the never-silent, always-changing song of the lake to the shore far below me. And there were other places of delight at Brandon Heights, so many of them that I could not begin to tell of them all; but it was in Lover's Lane that I met Her and so we go no farther.

It was early in the morning nearly a week after my arrival, and I had just come up from my bath in the lake by way of the steps which lead from the beach to the top of the Heights at the farther end of Lover's Lane. I was in my bathing-suit, one of those ridiculously abbreviated "one-piece" affairs which make you feel as though you want to shrink up and get behind yourself when you see anyone coming. And when I saw *Her* coming I looked wildly around for some means of escape, but I could not get off the map in time, for she had already seen me, and was coming swiftly toward me. She had such a young, buoyant step, and the morning winds swept her short white skirt back from her ankles—such ankles! The fairies might have envied her them—and flung her crinkly pale gold hair back from her eyes—such eyes! so young and clear and happy, with a thousand little naughty devils twinkling in their depths—and she came swinging on toward me adown the narrow path between the stately poplars, her little head held high with all of youth's self-confidence and independence, the very embodiment of fresh, vital young life. My, but she was good to look at! And I certainly looked at her. I knew there wasn't much of me she could not see if she looked at me, and I felt that it would only even things up a little if I

saw all of her that I could. And she did look at me—straight into my eyes, and—ye gods of this blessed day!—she said, "Good morning," just as though she had known me all her life. Of course it was up to me, so I said, "Good morning" to her as though I had known her all my life.

As I left Lover's Lane and crossed the lawn to the hotel I began to wonder where had she come from. Where did she belong? And then a thought came to me, oh, surely not at the hotel—my hotel I had grown to consider it. She was all right, of course, but I did not want anyone here to dispute my rights at this dear, dead old place. I asked no questions when I got back, but waited. She did not come in to breakfast, nor to lunch. Where, then, was she stopping?

It was not until the next morning that I saw her again, and again it was in Lover's Lane. There was just one spot there that, like the hotel, I called my own, and, of course, it was this spot that the intruder had taken possession of. It was a point of the cliff that jutted far out toward the lake till it seemed to hang almost in midair, deeply grassed and bountifully shaded by a single huge poplar that stood in the middle of it. And here I found her. She spoke as soon as I came near her.

"I fear that I have taken possession of a spot that you have probably called your own before I came here—see what I have found. Is it yours?" And she held something out toward me.

I took it; it was my cigarette-case. I had smoked and dreamed in the moonlight here in this spot half the night before and had got up and gone back to the hotel, half-asleep, and carelessly left it on the ground.

"Thank you, yes, it is mine, and yes—I *have* called this place my own before you came," I answered, determined to spare her no whit of the truth.

She laughed. It did not seem to bother her nearly as much as I considered it should, that she had usurped my throne.

"Possession, they say, is nine points of the law. I am in possession, but I am willing to share this coveted spot with you. Won't you be comfortable?"

Of course I immediately resigned my rights. I am awfully easy. "Thanks," I said, and stretched myself on the grass beside her.

She looked me frankly over, and then grinned delightedly.

"What a pretty man you are!" she said.

I tore up the grass in agonized handfuls, and plowed up the sod with my enraged toes. I was lying on my stomach so I could do all this quite easily.

"My fatal beauty!" I cried in tragic tones. "It pursues me everywhere—I cannot escape it—it is the curse of my existence." And I buried my burning face in my hands.

"Poor Cupid," she said after a moment, in a jerky little voice.

I sat up and glared at her. This last blow jarred me excessively—for two reasons. My wife once in the insanity of our first year of wedded bliss called me "Cupid," but only once, for I had forbidden her ever to do it again under penalty of losing me forever. But this vixen! this saucy jade—I couldn't forbid her anything. No threat of mine could have any weight with her. And I did not want to be reminded of my wife just then. The other reason was that I knew the name fitted me. That was the bitterest pang of all.

"I can't help it," I groaned. "It is my misfortune, not my fault. I was born that way—be merciful, I pray."

Her face became grave for a moment. "It must be rather a misfortune for a man to be pretty," she said thoughtfully. "Have you found it much of a drawback to you?"

I groveled under her clear searching eyes.

"I am a worm in the dust," I said with bitter finality, "and I'll never be anything else. That is what my beauty has done for me."

"Oh, so you know that you are beautiful, do you?" she answered.

I smiled fatuously. "I have a mirror in my room, ma'am," I replied.

She couldn't get past that, and I scored one. I waited for her to recover, and then I spoke.

"Where do you belong?" I inquired. "Not at the hotel, I believe."

"No, I am stopping at a little house in the village—just I and the old lady who lives in it are there."

"Why don't you stop at the hotel?"

"Please, sir, I am a lone female. Hotels are not for me."

"What is your name?" I asked next.

"My name?" She paused a moment and looked thoughtful. "I guess it must be Valentine. Don't you think so?"

"But why Valentine?"

"Cupids and Valentines always go together, don't they?"

My stupidity galled me exceedingly, and in my humiliation I bowed my head before her.

"Hammer it in," I pleaded. "I'll get it some time."

But she only laughed, and leaning over me blew a wicked little kiss on the back of my neck. Ye gods! . . .

It took some minutes for the tingle which began in my brain to work its way downward through the length of my anatomy and finally escape through the toes of my boots. But at last I recovered myself sufficiently to look up and speak to her.

"And are this Cupid and this Valentine going to go together?" I inquired.

She nodded her fluffy head. "Yeppy."

"What makes you think so?"

"I don't think so. I *know* so."

And she was right. We "went together" from that moment. And oh, what madness was this that possessed me? What witch's spell had she cast upon me? For not once during those perfect weeks of Summer days and nights that followed did I think of my wife. I thought only of *her*—walked with her, talked with her; dreamed of her, longed for her, and was blissfully happy with her.

"O wicked Lorelei," I cried to her sometimes, when we lay on the beach

together in our bathing-suits, she drying in the sun her long pale-gold hair that fell around her like Danaë's shower of gold. "What have you done to me? What is this siren's song that you have sung to me, that there is no room in my heart for anyone but you—no one in all the world but you?"

And she would only smile a dreamy smile to me, through eyes that sometimes I thought were tear-dimmed with happiness, and not say a word.

"Some day you will swim far away out into the water, away to your mermaid's palace in the depths of the blue, blue lake, and I shall be left here alone—alone."

Her eyes twinkled a little at that. "But didn't the sea-fairies lure their victims away with them?"

"O hither, come hither, and be our lords,

For merry brides are we:

We will kiss sweet kisses, and speak sweet words;

O listen, listen, your eyes shall glisten

With pleasure and love and jubilee,"

she chanted to me. "Perhaps I shall take you with me. Will you come—will you come?" she sang mockingly, and then before I could answer her she would be up and away, flying along the hard beach close to the water's edge, her feet splashing the spray around her, in a shower of diamonds, her red bathing-suit and her long hair streaming in the wind making her just one flash of scarlet with a veil of spun gold thrown over it.

But up on the land we became just every-day mortals once more, and wasn't she the saucy, daring little witch sometimes! How I kept myself in hand so long I don't know, but of course the end had to come sometime, I knew.

"I wonder, O Cupid, if kisses taste any better from beautiful lips like yours—a perfect Cupid's bow they are—than from just ordinary mere man's lips?" she said to me one afternoon as I lay on the grass beside her.

I rolled over and hid my face in disgust. "You saucy lump!" I said.

"But they *are* beautiful lips," she persisted. "I do wonder——"

"It's no use," I sternly interrupted.
"You can't try them."

"Not if I coaxed real hard?"

"Not if you coaxed *ever* so hard."

"You blessed dear!" she said. And then the thousand little devils came peeking out of her eyes again.

"And what beautiful hair you have—black, *raving* hair," she said, running her fingers through my luxuriant locks, which are the required length for artists and such-like.

"The better to entangle you, my dear," I replied.

"And what lovely white teeth——"

"The better to eat you, my dear," I interrupted, and snapped viciously at her plump white wrist.

She squealed and laughed delightedly as she jerked her hand out of my reach. "Oh, isn't it lovely being just children!" she cried.

And then we didn't say anything for a long time. We had such lovely times when we weren't talking. It was so nice having it all said without words.

"I feel as though I had known you for ages," I said to her after one of the long silences.

"Why, isn't that funny? That's just the way I feel about you."

And then I grew daring. "Shall we ever meet again after we leave here?" I said, with my most alluring smile.

She frowned and held up a warning finger. "Hush! There is no future and no past for us here. Just today, today—this glorious today! We have burned our bridges behind us, and we build none before us, for we are only paper people—just a lace-trimmed Valentine and a dear baby Cupid wreathed in lovely June roses," she cried gaily, placing on my manly brow a wreath of pink briar roses which she had gathered from the bushes along the roadside and fashioned into a head-dress for me, "and so here we have to stay for today."

"And you are not sorry that it is so?" I asked.

"No. Today is enough for me. Is it not for you also, dear friend?"

"Yes. It is enough for—*today*," I answered.

And so we drifted on together through that long lovely June—just she and I together:

"As through the balmy weather

Of July,

Drift two thistle-tufts embedded

Each in each—by zephyrs wedded—

Touring upward, giddy-headed.

For the sky."

We had a little volume of the Love Lyrics with us, and though she loved them all, that was the one that she came back to oftenest. Sometimes when we were tramping over the hills and through the fields and woods together, she would quote with a happy little laugh:

"Forever drifting downward

In a dream,

Where we meet song-birds that know us,

And the winds their kisses blow us,

While the years flow far below us,

Like a stream."

And one night—it had been bright moonlight when we started out—we were caught in a rain-storm out on the lake in an open rowboat, and it rained a perfect downpour, too. But she never turned a hair. It was all a part of the fun.

"Aye, even glad and merry," she sang as I pulled hard for the shore:

"Though on high

The heavens are sometimes shrouded

By the midnight storm, and clouded

Till the pallid moon is crowded

From the sky."

"It's all just part of the day's fun, isn't it?" she said as we plodded along through the muddy, rain-swept village street toward her house, after beaching our boat at the handiest place.

"Just part of the day's fun, dear Valentine," I echoed.

She opened the door when we reached her house, and stopped on the step a moment before she went in. The door opened right into the little living-room, and a lamp on the table threw its light across our faces. I thought she looked a little tired and there were dark rings under her eyes. Such a longing came into my heart to take her in my arms and hold her there always. I looked at her with longing

eyes, nor could I keep the wistfulness out of my voice.

"I wish I could comfy you tonight, dear Valentine," I said. "Somehow, you seem to belong to me—I think you have always belonged really to me. It does not seem right that we should be separated, that I should have to leave you when you are weary and perhaps just a little lonely."

There was a question in my voice as I spoke, and a pleading, that for one brief, mad moment I hoped she would not resist. But she did. And she smiled bravely back at me, though a little wistfully, too, I think.

"No, no," she said. "Not yet—I can wait—we must both wait. Oh, surely it will be worth waiting for! Good night, dear Cupid—good night." And she went in and closed the door.

I did not see her for two whole days after that. She had never asked me to come into the little house where she lived, and I, of course, had never asked her to come into the hotel. Somehow I did not want to see her under any human roof. I loved her best out in the open under God's roof. She was a saucy sprite of the air on land, and out on the lake she was "a mermaid fair, combing her hair."

And so we were very happy. We did not let ourselves think of the day when our holiday should have to end. But it came at last, the last day of sweet sunny June, and we were both going to town on the noon train. So we spent our last morning at Brandon Heights in our little spot in Lover's Lane. And I had made up my mind that I was going to tell her all. I had spoken no word of love to her in all these blissful days, I had never even so much as touched her hand except when the courtesy of a man's assistance to a woman demanded it.

And now on this our last morning she sat with her back against the big pop-

lar, and I lay stretched on the grass at her feet, just as we were the first morning that we spent there, and we were silent a long time. She was looking away out across the lake, but I was gazing up into her face, and it seemed to me that she had never looked so dear, so altogether lovely and desirable as she did this morning. There was such a perfect flush of health on her cheeks, and her eyes were so clear and steady—the thousand little wicked devils had vanished away just now, and there was a shining, expectant light in her dear eyes now that I had not seen there since she came here. Truly her holiday of outdoor life had done her a lot of good. And as I lay there studying her sweet face, it seemed as though I could never grow weary of it—its tender strength and pure womanly loveliness. Oh, she was too good to lose—too good to lose. I could not let her go! But at last I spoke.

"Sweet Valentine, I am a married man," I said.

She did not start or make any sound. But after a moment she brought her eyes back from their long journey over the waters, and turned their gaze down into mine.

"And I am a married woman, O Cupid," she said.

And I, too, made no sound or movement when she said this to me.

"And are you glad to go back now to your wife?" she went on after a moment.

"Yes," I said. "Oh, more glad than I can ever tell. And are you glad to go back to your husband?"

But she had no need of words. Her soul spoke through her eyes to mine, and I gathered her into my arms and kissed her—a long, long kiss of satisfied love and sweetest content. It had been so long to wait—this whole happy holiday month it had been since we had kissed each other. You see, she was my wife—my lifelong Valentine.



THE CORDUROY MAN AND HIS LADY OF SORROWS

By Charlotte Wilson

SHE sat on a log, facing the Drowned City, her brooding, absent eyes watching Uncle Dode as his crippled fingers deftly picked the shrimps out of his seine. The water, which had the dull gloss of molten lead, rippled restlessly; the sun, a softly-glowing ball, was just sinking into the bank of dunnish haze above the horizon; and his track, not fiery, but soft and luminous and rosy, appeared and reappeared in the rocking water like the glow of some rich, dim silk shot with crimson. On the bit of sand where the water seemed always running back into the receding wave the color lay especially bright and lovely, as if some rich wine had been spilt there, some sunset libation.

"I seen in the paper today that Guv'nor Edgerton's daughter's sailed for Europe," said Uncle Dode, breaking the silence as he deftly sorted his shrimps.

The girl started out of a deep abstraction. "Oh," she said, relapsing into the settled sadness which seemed habitual with her. "Oh, yes." Her voice, even in the colorless monosyllables, was very sweet—but, like everything else about her, from the shadow of the dark lashes on her smooth brown cheek to the droop of her delicate, proud little profile, it seemed steeped in the listlessness of young sorrow. A certain underlying richness colored that apathy; it was like the sadness of morning bells heard across some misty glade, where the sun has not yet touched the dripping harebells and the ferns.

Uncle Dode, squatting over his seine in his wet fisherman's rags, looked up at her where she sat on the common sand beside him, like a creature from another world. "Queer case, warn't it?" he pursued sociably. "'D they ever say why she broke off the marryin'?"

"No, they never said."

"Well, I'd like to know. An' there's somethin' else I've wondered about, heap o' nights. What'd they do with all them presents? An' all them troosos we was readin' about in every paper that come out? Why, one paper I seen give a list of 'em—gloves, an' shoes, an' gimcracks—shoo land! Si Anderson, up the ridge, he said he thought it was sinful—all the money that was wasted jest gettin' that one girl her weddin' togs an' presents. He said all them presents ought 'a' been sold and the money give to the Jews in Roosha. I think Si's sort of a anarchist, though; I reckon all them di'monds and jew'ls don't seem no more to them high-flyin' rich folks than our Sunday duds does to us. There was one thing, though"—Uncle Dode looked up from his shrimps with a quickened interest—"there's one o' them presents that did seem to me jest like a sinful waste—not to mention the plumb foolishness of it. That was that there di'mond dog-collar somebody sent her—warn't it the British ambassador and his wife? That's where I draw the line. I don't think nobody, no matter how rich they is, has a right to spend ten thousand dollars on a collar for nobody's dog.

Maybe, though, that was jest a fake. The papers——"

"Oh," said the girl, for the first time smiling faintly, "that wasn't a collar for a dog. It's a sort of necklace—they just call them dog-collars. They fit close around the neck, you know, like a dog's collar."

"Well—now!" Uncle Dode settled on his haunches a moment and paused in his sorting, while he luxuriated in the sensation of this surprising discovery. "Well—I do say. Now, ain't that the way we're always a-misjedgin' people—a-blamin' 'em for things that's jest our own mistakes? Now, I bet there's hundreds o' simple old hoosiers like me that thought jest like I did. So it was jest a necklace! I reckon you've saw 'em now, like as not? I reckon prob'ly you've got one of your own, back where you live?"

The girl stirred uneasily. "Oh, yes—I've seen them," she said. She rose from the log. "I guess I'll be going," she said, in her young, sad voice; "the sun's gone already. Good night, Uncle Dode. I'm glad you had good luck today."

She turned away—then paused. The Corduroy Man was coming down the trestle toward the point where they stood. He carried a fishing-rod over his shoulder, and a shining mackerel swung sinuously from his free hand. A field-glass was slung over the other shoulder.

Uncle Dode read her face. "That's a new feller that's staying up to the lighthouse," he said, in deprecating answer to the question in her eyes, unspoken, anything but pleased. "He just come this morning. He's some kind of a professor, or somethin'. They say he brought all kinds of queer traps with him. And look here," he added suddenly, as one admonishes a child for its own good, "you ought to git acquainted with him. They tell me he's clean daft about birds. I reckon he can maybe tell you all the things you been askin' me."

The girl had withdrawn her eyes as the man approached, and now, with her back toward the trestle, gazed out

across the bay, toward the Drowned City, as she waited for him to pass.

"I don't want to get acquainted with him," she said, very low. "I don't want to get acquainted with anybody, Uncle Dode. I came here to be by myself."

The man, swinging by, spoke to the old fisherman; the girl did not turn. She stood motionless, looking off across the darkening water; and when he had passed, with another good night to Uncle Dode, she went in the opposite direction, across the sand.

And that was the first time the Corduroy Man ever saw his Lady of Sorrows.

Half-a-dozen times, as he sat at supper that evening, faring sumptuously on the mackerel he had captured, the Corduroy Man opened his lips to ask about her; and as many times he closed them again. There was something in the aspect of his landlady that seemed incompatible with the vision of that face, with its fixed gaze away toward the "sad sea-horizons." But the next evening, as Uncle Dode again squatted over his shrimps, it was the Corduroy Man who sauntered across the sand toward him, with his hands in his pockets. He glanced at the log, evidently with the idea of sitting down upon it; then, for some reason, he thought better of the project, and sat down near it on the sand. After a preliminary exchange of obvious remarks, based upon shrimps, he raised his glass and surveyed the great birds that were plowing along the surface of the bay beyond.

"If the fact that they skim is any indication that they are skimmers," he remarked aloud, "then skimmers they must be. But of course it isn't. Warblers don't warble, and why should skimmers skim, Uncle Dode?"

There was something about the Corduroy Man that was like the air of a Spring morning. It was a tonic quality. And yet it seemed to grow out of something darker and deeper, as a flower grows from the rich black soil. There was nothing flippant about his brightness. It seemed to take an

underlying color from a certain deep and thoughtful sweetness. His friendly joyousness seemed incidental, flower-like, the delicate final product of roots that struck far and gripped deep, stubborn and strong and inured to striving. Uncle Dode looked at him, half-grudgingly, and then surrendered with very good grace.

"I doan know much about 'em, myself," he said; "leastways, about the names of 'em. But the young lady, that's what she said they was—skimmers. She has a glass, too—not so big as yourn, though."

Once more a pair of the great birds, with black-mantled wings outspread and white breasts catching the dazzle of the water beneath them, went plowing across the track of the setting sun, their carmine bills as they skimmed the blue water blazing out with a fierce brilliance. "I'll have to bring one of them down and get a good look at that bill," said the Corduroy Man, following them with his glass. "It's a pity, though, to stop one of them from skimming, just for the sake of one man's being a little the wiser. They seem to enjoy skimming most particularly." His face was turned away from the old man. "Who—who is the young lady, Uncle Dode?"

Uncle Dode looked up at him again with something like distrust. Had Uncle Dode—back in the early days before that one black day, when he came out of the sawmill with the poor, maimed hands that had slowly grown so astonishingly clever—had he, too, tasted of the cup which holds, for king and fisherman, the wine of the world? Certainly something had bred in him that peculiar, gentle passion of protectiveness toward all things young and beautiful—particularly woman-things. It was a perception of the quality which had made this sad-eyed girl-stranger, who shunned other company, come often and sit beside him as he worked over his nets and lines. Uncle Dode had no mind to betray a trust. And then, as he looked at the Corduroy Man, it suddenly occurred to Uncle Dode that he knew practically nothing

to tell. And in the same moment it was borne in upon him that, if he did know anything, the Corduroy Man could be trusted with it.

"She's Miss Gresham, from New York, niece o' one o' the big doctors over to town. Ever hear o' Dr. Gresham? That's queer—people come from everywhere, 'most, to see him—'specially them with what they call 'nerves'." He glanced across at the city on the island. "That's all anybody knows about her," he concluded. "She stays over to Captain Reaves's. She ain't well, I reckon, for Dr. Gresham, when he come over to see John Reaves's wife about her boardin' there, he said she wanted rest and quiet. She does seem mighty low-spirited like. She reads a lot—but she don't seem to care for what she's readin'. She walks right smart, though—an' I ain't heerd of her bein' down sick since she's been here."

"How long has that been?"

"Oh, three weeks, or some such matter."

The stranger was silent; presently Uncle Dode looked up suddenly from his nets.

"She looks like somebody I've saw," he said, "or else—some picture—or somethin'." He stared across the sand, his blurred memory grappling with the now familiar puzzle. The Corduroy Man said nothing; he had had the same impression; but the name had settled the matter for him. He felt illogically and most unnecessarily relieved. He remembered the picture and where he had seen it. The resemblance was oddly striking.

A few minutes later he saw her in the distance, coming along the beach toward them. He was aware when she saw him; she stopped suddenly, and then lifted her glass and looked out across the bay, as if something there had caught her attention. But the Corduroy Man got himself together and to his feet and, with a good night to Uncle Dode, betook himself briskly in the direction of the lighthouse. Not once, moreover, did he look back, until, having reached the gate, he

raised his glass for a moment and saw her sitting on the log—her attitude, as before, bespeaking a deep weariness, a sort of passionate carelessness of life. Most people would have said she was too young for such a look. But the Corduroy Man was wise; he had been young himself. As it was, he was more than thirty. As he stole that long, unlawful look through his bird-glass, the sensitive mouth under his short, well-clipped mustache looked very grave and kind.

During the next week he exerted his utmost ingenuity in the effort to keep out of her way. It did not make him happy; for he was really trying, in good faith, not to spoil her solitude. And it did not add greatly to his happiness to perceive that she was engaged in the same endeavor—and that the necessity for it annoyed her. No matter if he took his fishing-tackle and his bird-glass and went far up to the Gulf, which was beyond the reach of her evening walks, he was sure to cross her path when he came home. He must needs go without his mail if he refrained from going within sight of the little ship-like house, buried among the oleanders and orange-trees, where she boarded; and he had surrendered the best place for the marsh-birds entirely because he observed that she, too, had discovered its advantages, and often wandered there in the evenings with her glass. She used it listlessly, he thought, and yet with more apparent interest than was usual with her. It was astonishing how many things, in the course of his labors to avoid her, he had occasion to observe.

That particular part of the marsh gave him more trouble than anything else. He really did have a disinterested yearning to go there. The herons fed there every evening—so wild, shy and suspicious at the North, here comparatively tame. And once he had caught a glorious glimpse of a white ibis. It was hard to renounce them. To be sure, she did not go there every evening; but there was always a risk of seeming to follow her up or to anticipate her, and so claim the neighborhood by

right of prior occupation. It was not as if there could be the appearance of coming upon her by accident, the Corduroy Man reflected discontentedly; in a country where you can see five miles with the naked eye and an unlimited distance with a field-glass, a seemingly intrusive man armed with the latter weapon could claim but scant charity on the ground of short-sightedness. Besides, he reminded himself sharply, he did not wish to intrude, even by accident. So he confined himself to beating about among the coffee-beans on the prairie, and haunting the beaches, and cruising on the bay; but his soul yearned toward the herons, of whom he caught only tantalizing glimpses.

One morning, however, he had an inspiration. He, too, had come to this out-of-the-way place partly for rest; he had been lying abed like a Sybarite, and refusing to do anything at a given time. Even the work he had brought with him he made to wait upon his whim. But there came a day when he stretched his muscles and discovered that they had the old-time spring; and then it was that he bethought himself of the marsh as a likely place at half-past four in the morning.

Before the sun was up next morning he was swinging across toward his coveted observatory. The marsh was hardly awake; only the untiring night-hawks were circling above on their white striped wings, and here and there a redwing swung in ecstasy on the spray of a coffee-weed and fluted his joyous, liquid note. He was approaching the salt bayou when, behold! a distant procession of four or five looming bulks, over at the edge of the little reedy island! His glass went automatically to his eye. Then he hastily looked about him for a possible shelter; the far-sighted, sagacious birds would soon detect a human figure. A mesquite bush a little further on, a mere insignificant dot on the broad stretch of the flat, looked promising. He went toward it cautiously, his glass to his eye, and found it quite sufficient for his needs. Comfortably settled in the

screen of it, he congratulated himself that it served a double purpose: it protected him alike from the suspicion of the birds and from the open-mouthed curiosity of the occasional section-hand who would presently be passing along the county road beyond.

The marsh began to wake up; the sun struggled above the band of brownish haze along the eastern edge of the world, rosy and softly glowing, as he had been setting of late. The Corduroy Man turned his glass upon the great new-comer for a moment, and thought that, as he shone, a crimson globe, through the thin-leaved, thorny branches of the mesquite, he looked like a bit of some Japanese picture. The herons, he reflected, should have been in it, too. While so engaged he was aware of a slight sound behind him. Looking around, he saw her almost up to him, coming toward his tiny shelter cautiously, with her glass to her eyes, as he had come a few moments before. Her step made almost no sound on the thick marsh-grass and on the spongy soil—how should so little a foot, indeed, though clad in the most severely correct of broad little shoes (such dear, muddy little shoes!), make much of a stir anywhere? She was utterly unconscious of his presence, and she had evidently the same designs upon the mesquite bush which had lured him toward it.

The Corduroy Man thought quickly. Which, if you were young, and aloof, and very beautiful, and almost disdainfully sad, would be the most startling and annoying: to step on a strange knight under a mesquite bush, or to see one scramble up like a scared rabbit at your approach, or——?

"Good morning," said the Corduroy Man pleasantly.

Ah, the startled lift of the little dark head, the widening of the nostril, the beautiful pallor of the brown cheek, as the color sank visibly out of it! Yet even the startled gesture which brought down her field-glass had dignity in it, and the proudly chiseled young face made no other concession to the momentary fright.

"Good morning," she said simply. "Are those cranes or herons?"

He was standing beside her now, cap in hand. "I was just deciding that it must be the great blue heron," he said. He glanced at her face, then at the seat on the ground he had quitted.

"I'll be glad to give you my place," he said; "they are very suspicious and shy. But—I'd be gladder to share it with you. There—the big fellow's gone! What a splendid, broad-winged, leisurely flight he has, hasn't he?"

At the flight of the big bird the girl had seated herself quickly on the ground. Now she looked up at him, polite and unsmiling, as before.

"No," she said, "I shall only want it for a moment. Please sit down. I—I do not object."

She spoke with a dignity so assured as to be, under the circumstances, almost unflattering. But the next moment, as if she wished to prevent any such impression, she said, with a grave curtsy, "I believe you know a great deal about birds?"

The Corduroy Man laughed. "No," he said, "a little. I like to study them, as a rest from my other work. But I am utterly innocent of any real knowledge. I know my limitations. You see, I have a friend who is a real ornithologist; and he keeps me humble. Besides, I've never had much chance at the water-birds. You probably know them better than I—indeed, I believe that I have it on your authority that those very effective fellows—see, coming down the bayou there—are skimmers?"

He had spoken at length, from a half-defined impulse to show her that he understood her attitude; some unformulated wish to prove to her once and for all that she need not regret her quiet civility to him.

He might have spared himself the trouble. Lonely and sad as she seemed, she was manifestly in no need of reassurance. Her eyes followed the great birds, as they flew away toward the Gulf, uttering again and again their muffled bark. "My authority?" she asked.

"Yes; Uncle Dode told me you said so."

For the first time she smiled faintly—a smile that passed as quickly as the extra heart-beat it caused the Corduroy Man. "Yes," she said, in a voice that was only a shade too courteous for indifference. "They are very beautiful, I think."

By this time the marsh was awake and alive. The breeze had risen with the sun, and the little marsh-birds running about them filled the air with their cries.

One long-legged brown wader was particularly noisy, keeping up a continual clatter, his long black bill opening and shutting constantly like a pair of scissors. He stood but a few feet away from the two observers, the reflected bird in the sunny water quite as distinct as the corporeal one, and the two together forming a sort of anomalous double-bird, intensely knock-kneed. The Corduroy Man watched him.

"The clatter he keeps up," he remarked presently, "is enough to send any intelligent mollusk to the other end of the marsh."

She, too, had been gazing at the gawky, clamorous fisherman. "He does it from a sense of duty," she explained musingly. "He ran down just now, and the noise that other one was keeping up reminded him."

He glanced at her very quickly; a sudden change came over his face, warming, softening, kindling it. Something was felt in the silence. Then he said in a low voice:

"Why are you so sad?"

She sat, looking away, without moving. Already the lighter mood had passed; so weak, indeed, was youth's natural impulse toward effervescence that it had exhausted itself in the one little bubble of whimsical irony. She understood what was passing in his mind. The quiet depth of his question, the controlled vibration of his voice, seemed to go home to some essential part of her. There was quite an interval of silence before she answered, looking out across the marsh:

"The world is sad. Why are you so happy?"

"The world is happy."

"Prove it. I can give you more evidence that the world is sorrowful than you can possibly give that it is happy."

A redwing lighted upon a tall reed near-by, and whistled jubilantly as it gave beneath his palpitating weight. The man's eyes rested upon the satiny sheen of his scarlet epaulets in the early sunshine.

"Well, there's birds," he said.

She, too, looked at the joyous singer, with passionate dark eyes that saw his beauty. "Did you ever read," she answered, "Keats's letters? Do you remember the passage where he speaks of the 'gentle robin ravening a worm'?"

"Ah!" said the Corduroy Man. "That was after he fell in love with Fanny Brawne, wasn't it?"

She turned her dark eyes upon him. "What if it was?" she said. "The fact had been there all along, only he had not seen it. He was a poet, and of course he was drunk with the unspeakable beauty of the world. But he had a mind and a heart, as well as eyes; and he could not help seeing that at the bottom of all the beauty there's ugliness, and cruelty, and death."

There was no reply; and after a moment she spoke almost angrily, looking away across the marsh:

"You think it is silly to feel so? You think it sounds like the heroine of a sentimental novel? You think I am 'too young' to suffer?"

The man lay, resting on his elbow, very still; it was as if he feared the motion of a finger might shake some inner floodgate and let loose a torrent. He did not even move his eyes. And then, suddenly, he snatched up a pebble that lay beside him and sent it skimming far out over the water. He watched it as it skipped over the blue surface, touching again and again. "Not at all," he said at last.

The girl looked at him, and she met blue eyes that were dizzy as with a pain that was just passing. But he smiled

reassuringly. "It is when one is young that one suffers most," he said.

She had risen now, and he stood beside her. As he spoke, she gave him a quick, grave look that was almost grateful.

He returned the look with an unoffending smile. "You must be almost twenty," he said, with something of the humorous gentleness one uses toward a child.

"I am nearly—twenty-one."

"So old as that!" he said. There was a look in his eyes that was very deep and sweet. "It will get better later on; believe me. I—I think I know. I can't prove my point, I admit. But it's a good working theory. Try it. May I tell you my name, Miss Gresham?"

Again she smiled. "No," she replied. Then, while he was getting his breath, she said, with some pity for his simplicity, "Everybody on the peninsula knows your name. However," she added, by way of concession, "they do not call you by it."

"What do they call me?" he asked, with unfeigned curiosity.

"They call you the Corduroy Man," she said. "The little boy at the lighthouse started it."

"I see. And do they call you the Walking-Skirt Lady?"

"I never heard them." The answer was not encouraging. The Corduroy Man surmised that she wished to be rid of him. Nevertheless, "I have a—a name for you," he persisted brazenly.

She raised her delicate dark brows. "Indeed?" she said.

The Corduroy Man nodded abjectly. "Don't you wish I'd tell you?"

He felt rewarded for his determined idiocy by the unmistakable flicker of real amusement that seemed to pass like a ripple under the grave surface of her proud, sad little face. What she said was, "Really, I don't think I need to know." But, as they parted, she added, "Thank you for sharing your observatory. You were very kind."

There was a sound of finality about that which made the Corduroy Man

uncomfortable. Later, however, he became aware that he had hopes. And he was not disappointed; for thereafter he found it very easy to talk to her now and then—disquietingly easy. For there was a certain sensitive perceptiveness in his make-up, and the fact was not lost upon him that her very accessibleness was not flattering. Its root was indifference. Had she been more interested in him, the Corduroy Man argued, she would instinctively have remembered the value of those conventions to which, it was evident, she had been bred. She had the air of being outside of conventions; of having cast them aside, along with other things so much more important that she scarcely missed them. She had the sort of sureness of self which comes—or so he believed—of hardly caring what becomes of oneself. And, for all she looked so young and flower-like, there was something bitter, something hard and blighting, about her unlifting sadness. It was as if it struck at the very roots of the flower.

"I have been thinking of what you called your 'working theory,'" she told him, with unsmiling directness, the next time he talked to her after the morning on the marsh. "That is the most sensible argument for optimism I've ever met with. And that is successful because it evades argument: it puts the matter outside the realm of logic."

The man was studying her. He glanced at the book by her side; it was a socialist's account of a sojourn of several months in the East End of London. The other morning she had carried a treatise on political economy. His eyes came back from the book to her face. There was a seriousness, a gentle gravity in his scrutiny which she could not resent.

"You are—very unusual," he told her presently.

"And why?" she answered instantly. "In a world where suffering is the rule and happiness the exception, why is it considered the natural thing to ignore the suffering, and a morbid, abnormal

thing to feel it, to face it? Why, one day's newspaper, if you think of it, is enough to take all the joy out of the sunlight for a year of days! Why is it logical to read about the massacre of three hundred Jews in Russia, and the throwing of a bomb at a royal marriage—that leaves a young girl's wedding-dress spattered with blood, and a desperate man gladly yielding up his life for the honor of doing such a deed—not to mention all the murders and suicides and violent deaths—*why* is it right and natural to read about these things and then sit down to a good dinner, or go to a play or a party? Why are people happy? Why should they be? How can they be? It is the greatest mystery to me in all the mysterious world!"

"Yes," he said, "it is a mystery—the inmost paradox."

"Isn't it a sort of wilful madness—a strange, selfish stupidity?"

"No; it is the heart of wisdom."

"Why?"

"I don't know."

"Are you happy?"

The man gazed across the bay. "Yes."

"Then *why* are you happy?" she demanded passionately.

"Why are you sad? Is it all because of the Jews in Russia, and the Queen of Spain's bridal dress?"

She turned upon him with indignant disappointment. "Now you are talking as they all talk," she said. "I wondered how long you would be serious with me: now you are giving the universal answer—a joke. It's a very easy answer. Do you suppose I couldn't give that one, too, if I chose? Do you suppose I couldn't go on doing the easy and pleasant thing, and shut my ears to it all, until I should stop hearing it, too? But I don't want to stop! Oh, what I want is an answer—an answer!"

"I beg your pardon," he said gravely. "I knew I was flippant." He looked away again across the water. "I do not know the answer. I have only a working theory."

"Does it make you happy?"

He hesitated. "It has stood the strain so far. I think it would—yes."

"Tell it to me."

"Ah—a working theory isn't a creed; you can't hand it over in a package. I'm not sure that I have a creed."

"In the old days," said the girl, in a low voice, "that is, in some periods of the world's history—there has been religion."

"There is still," said the man gently.

"But it isn't the old kind. Sometimes I think that is the answer—the only one. It is at least logical. It says that the world is an evil, unhappy, doomed place; and that only a small part of it shall come to good, or ever see happiness and peace. The old religion admits universal evil, and denies inherent good; the new religion preaches universal good, and denies evil. The old is more logical."

"There isn't any place in it, though, for birds."

She turned her passionate dark eyes upon him with a swift look of comprehension. Into the man's mental vision there flashed the memory of the red-wing, with his epaulets of crimson satin, fluting on the reed in the morning sunshine. "No," she said, "nor for love, nor the pride of life—nor a good many other things. But it's an answer."

"So you admit love—and the pride of life—and the delight of the eyes?"

"I admit that they exist. So did the old religion: it said that they *were* the instruments of the devil. Who knows that they are not? They are essentially selfish; they survive by ignoring the pain of the world."

"Love does not."

She changed her position with a movement of deep impatience. "I do not know," she said, with slow bitterness, "much about—love."

"Ah!" said the man, and was silent.

Presently she spoke again, passionately. "*Why* are you happy?"

"Well," said the man slowly, "I believe you have helped me to formulate my creed."

"What is it?"

"I believe," said the man almost solemnly, "in Love; I abjure Despair."

"It is vague," she said.

"It is comprehensive," he answered. "The positive part is religion; the negative part is conduct."

For the first time during the argument she smiled a little. "Ah," she said, "you always come back to your working theory."

"Assuredly," he answered. "Happiness depends upon it."

There was a silence, during which she went around the subject and came up on the other side of it. "Have you anything to make you unhappy?" she asked.

The Corduroy Man considered. "There's a bird I can't classify," he began, but the deep indignation of her look checked him, and he answered after a pause, "No great thing, now—no. I have had, naturally, from time to time. And," he pulled up a blade of grass and examined it carefully, "I doubtless shall have again. But—it is for such occasions that I need my working theory."

"What are the small things?" she demanded.

"Oh," answered the Corduroy Man easily, "I'm poor, and I've never been to Europe, and I don't like crabs. The poignancy of this last grief lies in the fact that I haven't the heart to tell my landlady, because she plumes herself upon being able to cook them seventeen different ways. Then there's the anonymous bird I spoke of."

She ignored the frivolity of his latter remarks. "Poor!" she exclaimed.

The Bird Man flopped over on his side and began examining the formation of the soil. Presently he looked up; again there was that odd, dizzy look in his blue eyes. "I knew it all along," he said quietly.

"What?"

"That you are unhappy because you are rich."

"Well," she said haughtily, "and I suppose you think that is mere absurdity—a schoolgirl's pose. Do you?"

"No," he said gravely. "No, not at all."

They were silent so long that presently she said impatiently, "Tell me, then, what you do think."

"Why," he said slowly, "I can understand your problem. But mine has always been so different."

"Please explain it to me." She spoke more gently than she had yet done.

"Why," he said, "it's the same as yours in essence, only the incidents are different. What we both want is liberty—freedom. The rich man is chained by his riches, the poor man by his poverty. Money to the poor man, you know, means leisure, opportunity, travel—yes, even congenial companionship. I have tried for that most, I think. When a man has certain interests, you know, he naturally wants to meet and know people who share them."

She was more obviously interested than she had yet been. She seemed for a moment almost to have forgotten herself.

"You do not look—poor," she said at last. And then she added hesitantly, "How poor are you?"

"Well," said the Corduroy Man gravely, "I think I might say, without boasting, that I have progressed from the estate of the church-mouse to that of Job's turkey. I really do not think that I am any poorer than Job's turkey, at the moment."

She looked away haughtily. "I beg your pardon," she said.

The Corduroy Man smiled disarmingly. "I am not so poor as I once was," he said. "I have hopes of going to Europe before I am forty. I am even," he added pleasantly, "getting to know some of the people I've always wanted to know. Oh, I'm getting along, thank you."

"What kind of people have you wanted to know—scientists and authors, I suppose?"

"Yes—and people like you. Don't scold me, please, I sha'n't be personal. But I've wanted to know the people who expressed in their bearings—and

in their profiles—yes, in their feet and their ears—the sense of distinction I've always felt in my soul."

She smiled, a smile he had not yet seen. "Your profile is very good," she remarked dispassionately. And a sudden new gaiety in her eyes added, "And so are your feet."

"Thank you," said the Corduroy Man, blushing. "I'm a bit of a snob. I've *had* to be, you see. If I'd been born to the purple, on the other hand, I'd have been one of these free-and-easy, democratic fellows, always discounting their superior advantages. When I go to confession," he added cheerfully, "I always make a clean breast of it."

"Have you had—much of a struggle?" she asked him.

"Oh, I've knocked around a bit," said the Corduroy Man. "In its early stages a scientist's life, like a policeman's, is not necessarily a happy one. I've always had a leaning toward the theoretical side of it—and that has caused me trouble. And I rather hate teaching. Is my time coming?"

She caught herself with a slight start. "What do you wish to know?" she asked coldly.

"I've never yet learned all I wished to know on any given subject," said the Corduroy Man cheerfully. "Human experience is necessarily incomplete. If I might ask, though, one or two questions—you don't have to answer them, you know."

"I understand."

"Then—how did you chance to be in this out-of-the-way corner—alone? I never heard of anybody's spending a Summer here—that's why I came. And why *you* should be here—that's what puzzles me most."

"I have an uncle who lives over there—I call it the Drowned City," she said, pointing across to the City on the Island. "I was—unhappy, and they thought I was ill. But I wanted to be alone; that was all. My uncle I can always depend upon; he understands. Besides, he's a nerve specialist; and I'm supposed to be afflicted with them, I believe. I came

down to him; but I hated the Drowned City, and I happened to hear about this place. I made him let me come. I promised to—improve. I've been trying. My mother is dead."

"Ah," he said gravely. "Thank you."

He did not ask any more questions that day, nor indeed, on the subsequent days when he talked to her. The weeks passed over their heads.

"I wonder," he ruminated cheerfully one day, "if corduroy is a good material to be made of."

"It is—soft," she remarked.

"It is comfortable," he amended cheerfully.

"I would scorn," she said, "to be merely comfortable."

"It isn't *merely* comfortable," said the Corduroy Man, glancing down at his knickerbockers dispassionately; "it wears well."

"Does it?" she answered indifferently, though her eyes betrayed a glimmer of amusement. Then, somberly, "I distrust all comfortable things."

"Yes," he answered, "I've thought of that, too. But that way lies asceticism. And that didn't save the world, either, did it?"

"No," she answered, "there was the reaction. There always is."

One day he ventured to tell her his name for her.

"But do you know," he added, "I don't think it suits you so well any more. Are things—getting better?"

He spoke very wistfully; reverently as he thought of her young sadness; he had a theory of his own as to why she was so weighted down by the fate of the queen's bridal dress and of the Jews in Russia. And, as he fancied he saw that sorrow lifting, there were times when his heart sank. Indeed, the Corduroy Man was by this time looking straight in the eyes a future in which he was to have abundant need, he realized, of his working theory.

The girl started a little, and withdrew within herself. "I suppose I'm feeling better," she said. "I must have been sick, I guess, as they said.

It isn't logical to be cheerful, but I suppose it's a human instinct. Nature is abominably selfish."

He looked at her, and beyond her he seemed to see a whistling redwing, swaying in the morning sun. "Yes," he said, "it's instinct."

But there came a day when it ceased to be instinct for him. For the inevitable time came when, looking out across the bay one evening, she said quietly, "I'm going away."

He was so quiet that she was not sure he had heard her. "I am going away," she said.

"I don't want you to go," he said, and the little speech was so simple and wistful and sad that it embarrassed her as the most passionate avowal would not have done. And then he looked up and smiled at her with the dizzy look in his blue eyes. "No, I don't want you to go. But I'm not going to bother you. Dear Lady of Sorrows, you have been the joy of the world to me these short weeks past."

She turned her head away. "Oh," she said, "how could I mean joy to anybody?"

He spoke again wistfully. "You do not want to tell me, before you go, what it was that hurt you so? You have been like a wounded sea-swallow on the beach; I have been watching you, these weeks, as you learned to use again your beautiful, swift wings."

She did not speak at once. "I shall be there, a few days," she said, "in the Drowned City. You may come and see me there, if you like, at my uncle's. Perhaps then I will tell you."

A few days afterward, as he sought out the address she had given him, he reflected that this was a joy beyond his wildest dreams. And yet, he asked himself, what was the use, when every joy must be paid for now with a three-fold pang? Then he squared his shoulders and dismissed peremptorily that skeleton at his feast; it was part of his code to pay promptly and cheerfully for his joys.

He did not have to look for the number, for he saw her, in a white dress, sitting in the fragrant shade of the ole-

anders on the porch. A tall, spare, white-haired old gentleman was beside her—an old gentleman who surveyed him with a keen though benevolent interest. He seemed to be an old gentleman of an interrogative tendency, too, the Corduroy Man thought as he sat between them a moment later; but first and always an old gentleman. The Corduroy Man remembered her saying that her uncle "understood." He must have understood his guest, for after a decent interval he found it necessary to get into the buggy that stood at the curbstone and drive away—incidentally leaving them quite alone.

The man leaned forward impulsively. "Tell me now," he said. "I cannot wait any longer. A ghost of hope has risen up to torment me—and I want you to lay it."

"You *want* me to lay it?" she asked, raising her eyes to his face quickly, and then letting them fall to the book in her lap, which lay open at the fly-leaf. Her question was destined never to be answered; for the name on the fly-leaf caught his eye. After one look at her he sat perfectly still, with a face that slowly paled and paled.

At last he turned back to her. "It is laid," he said hoarsely. "Tell me why you broke your engagement, and then I will go. Didn't you love him—don't you?"

"I thought I loved him," she said drearily; "I gave him a great deal." For a little while she was silent, apparently quite lost in a dim, still world of grief. Then she seemed to remember that he was expecting her to explain.

"I must have loved him," she said, "for, after it was over, I didn't seem to have much left—of anything. But I had never been satisfied. He had never understood. He liked me when I went along like the rest; but when I told him how it seemed wrong to me for us to be so rich and happy, while so many people were poor and suffering, everywhere, he would laugh at me as if I were a funny child. I had always said that I would never marry a man who was rich. But—I let him laugh

away my doubts, for ne was big, and good-looking, and kind, and I—loved him. It was when the wedding was announced that the trouble came. You remember the papers—how they talked about the presents, and described my clothes, and published my pictures, until I might as well have been a popular actress? It wasn't only that we were rich; we were so horribly—prominent, too. Daddy's being a 'Reform Mayor' and—his—record in the Spanish War"—she would not mention the other man's name—"everything seemed to conspire to make publicity inevitable. And then—then I began to get letters about the presents. Oh, if you could have seen them!"

The beautiful little dark face looked pinched and sharp. She glanced at the set face of the man beside her, and went on helplessly:

"Some of them were begging, some threatening, some preaching, and all of them from people who were in trouble, trouble, trouble! My aunt found out about them, and then she kept them away from me; but I knew they were coming, and I could imagine them all out, without seeing them. And I couldn't endure it. Oh, if he had understood, if he had been sorry—I could have borne it. I would have gone with him—into his life—and believed that, somehow, it might not be all wrong. But he—laughed. And that hardened my heart. I had told him all that was in my heart; and he laughed. Then, suddenly, I did not love him. I could not and I would not marry him."

It was quite still on the porch till she went on again with her story.

"They said I had melancholia—perhaps I had. They said I had gone to Europe; and uncle came up and got me and brought me down here. But even here people looked at me curiously, as if they recognized me; and I heard of the little, quiet place over across the bay, and I made uncle take me there, and leave me. He was good, and he did—only making me give him my word that I wouldn't drown myself in

the bay. He said time and quiet would help me. And—it has."

"But—your name?" said the man. "Why did you change it?"

"I had to," she said. "Even there they had seen my picture. Why, even Uncle Dode knew all about the presents. And it was so easy to use uncle's name."

After a long pause the man turned to her with a sorry smile. "The moment has come," he said, "for me to announce to you that I'm a prince in disguise. But I can't live up to my rôle. To the best of my knowledge, I'm not."

His brave show of valor hurt her; but there was something, evidently, upon her mind. She looked at him with a curious hesitation. "You—you may be a famous scientist some day," she said.

"Possibly."

"But—you're not likely to be very rich?"

In spite of his sad eyes the Corduroy Man laughed. "Not by any chance," he said.

She seemed to have nothing more to say. At last the man rose. Silently he held out his hand.

It was dusk now in the shade of the oleanders. The girl stood looking at him a moment. Then she put her hands behind her, threw up her head, the tears in her eyes.

"I won't!" she said passionately. "You've forgotten your creed!"

"My creed?" he repeated rather dazedly, looking at her with the dizzy look in his eyes she had learned to know. And then a wild question struggled into them. "Oh!" he said, not daring to believe; and the depth of passion in the word frightened her, so that she stood still, trembling.

She held her little head up with a sort of piteous pride. "I—I haven't learned," she said, "to go alone—yet. I—I can't be happy—by myself. And—and I'm afraid to go back—where I was."

The man fought a moment longer; then, with one step, he had her in his arms. "It's—it's the answer," she

gasped, her soft breath against his cheek. "It's—it's hackneyed, and—it's not logical, but——"

He did not answer at once, in words. When he did, holding her at arm's length, he looked very tall in the dusk of the porch, and his eyes very solemn

and sweet. "It will wear well," he said huskily. "That's all I can promise you; but I *can* promise you that. Do you think that will do?"

"Oh," she breathed, as she let him draw her back, "I'm afraid—that's all—I want!"



THE WAIL OF A WAITRESS

By Ethel M. Kelley

HE had the nerve to bring her here to eat;
I seen them comin' half-way down the street,
An' I was ready for them, you can bet.

I ain't a-showin' the white feather yet;
She's got my beau, but I don't say I'm beat.

I waited till they'd settled in their seat.

"Fine day," I says to him real soft and sweet.

"Fine day," he says, "'F you like your weather wet."

He had the nerve!

Don't say a word, I fixed that couple neat!

He acted like he's crazy with the heat;—

He didn't have no notion what he et.

He can't come here to jolly up his pet.

She didn't come this way with willin' feet—

He had the nerve.



TIME TO BE CAREFUL

GOBANG—I understand he is looking for a wife.

NEWLYWED—Thunderation! Whose?



A WAGER

SAPPY—She has the prettiest mouth in the world.

CHAPPY—Oh, I don't know. I'd put mine up against it.

THE WORD THAT WENT FROM HIM

By Grace MacGowan Cooke

THE two small girls standing before their grandfather shuffled uneasily, and looked anywhere but into his rapt, intent face.

"There is a question which I have felt it would soon be necessary to lay before you children," he said, as with long, thin, nervous fingers he sorted the papers from which he had been reading.

Alicia sighed and wished that she might sit down. Champe stood at ease on one foot and glanced sidewise from her big, bright eyes at her uncomfortable sister. A smile which she could not suppress made a crease in her spare little brown cheek where there would have been a dimple in Alicia's.

"You are very young—both of you," went on Ithurial Claiborne querulously, as though his eight- and ten-year-old granddaughters were some way to blame for the fact; "yet, when I go afoot and bare-headed about these dusty country roads, teaching in the open fields humble men and women who are willing to forsake the follies of this world and tread the path with me, you ought to see"—his grievance brought him suddenly to the colloquial—"that your Aunt Missouri must not put ruffled frocks on you to accompany me."

"I'm sorry, grandfather," came Alicia's soft little voice upon the bruised silence; "I never thought of it. But I will wear my school dress when we go to the grove next Sunday, and not braid my hair."

The old man seemed somewhat comforted. A gentle soul, with but a soiling touch of the histrionic, the swift, humiliating failure of a new church

which he sought to establish among the conservative poor whites of a Southern village had stung him to thrust this discomfiting scene upon the two little girls. He was a slender old gentleman in his somber, ministerial garb, with the snowy hair which had once been sandy lying unshorn upon his coat collar. The gray-green eyes and thin, irritable skin which belong with his type were reddened from exposure to sun and wind during his day of outdoor preaching. He had a trick of shuffling words that fascinated little Champe's eager mind as the fingers of an expert shuffling a pack of cards might have held her observant eyes.

"I—I—the time has come to say it. You are both young—too young—but I cannot put it off. There must be an election made, and it must be made tonight. The world, as I see it, is all traveling to destruction. Only a faithful few—among whom I am the least—rise up to point out to men—and to women—that frills upon garments, jewels, the wanton trimming of hair and beard, the braiding of locks with ribbons of bright hue, the setting of the heart upon these foolish, outer adornments—must drag our souls down to perdition."

Alicia fixed her mild gaze on her grandfather's face, put her small hands behind her, and attended to every word. She was a lymphatic child, and these outbursts of febrile zeal only stirred pleasantly her spiritual nature. Overstrung little Champe must either turn a deaf ear, oppose, or deliver up her passionate young soul to be wrought to frenzy. The old man took off his spectacles, wiped them, and laid them

down upon his papers. He rose and paced through the room once or twice, then drew up before the expectant small figures, and began speaking vehemently.

"You must know that I cannot lash you to the masts of the holy Fisherman, and fling you overboard into the sea of glory; that I cannot pick the locks of the golden gates for you, if you do not choose to walk the hard, hard way which will find them open."

Champe loved these figures of her grandfather's speech; already, in mind, she was wallowing luxuriously in that sea of glory he had mentioned, when she bobbed to the surface with a round turn, to hear him say:

"This day you two shall choose as chose the young man in the Bible—is it to be heaven or hell? Which will you have? Think well. It is necessary that I put the free option before you now—now. Heaven or hell—which will you have?"

His thin, unworldly face was thrust toward them, the light eyes fixed and glowing. Unregenerate Champe was moved to reply as Aunt Missouri had trained her when asked whether she preferred the white or dark meat—"A little of both, please." She surmounted this impulse, and studied Alicia for a moment. Great tears were gathering in the elder sister's eyes and dropping quietly down her smooth, pink cheeks. She was that one child in a hundred who could weep without distorting her countenance.

"If you decide for heaven—now listen attentively—you this day begin your journey with penance, work, self-immolation and study," declared the old man.

"I love to study," put in Champe. "At least I love it for a while. But we could play all recess time and go to heaven, couldn't we, grandfather?"

Ithuriel Claiborne's lip trembled; it was drawn in and bitten. Allusion to school brought back burning the day's humiliations. He looked down at the back of his hand where dried blood marked the length of the scratch a random stone had made that morning

when they passed a group of boys before the schoolhouse where Orthodox meeting was in progress. This petty wound had healed—or was healing; but the Claiborne pride yet bled. Should he leave the children to association with those who stoned their grandfather?

"You shall not continue to go to a public school if you choose heaven!" he cried sharply. "I think it not fit preparation for a spiritual life. I shall myself instruct you in Hebrew, Greek, Latin and theology; our daily reading shall be the fathers of the churches. You will there learn by what route your grandfather reached his present simplicity of belief. You shall be familiarized with Wesley, Taylor, Luther, Calvin—all the founders of faiths—as I am. We will not wholly neglect the Apocrypha. Your days shall begin at four o'clock, when you will walk and study with me until the morning meal—if it be a day upon which we are eating; but I will teach you how blessed a thing it is to fast, remembering that God's poor go hungry, and that the spirit is most richly fed when the body is denied." (Alicia winced.) "I will comply with the oft-repeated desire of your Aunt Missouri, and let you be taught to assist about the household labors, so that the negroes may be discharged. It will be an outreaching into the moral and practical life of woman. It will inculcate patience and filial piety."

He took a long breath and looked about him.

"In the afternoon you may sew as did Deborah; and at night we shall all sing hymns together. On the blessed Sabbath you can as usual join me in my labors to glean the hedgerows and the waste places, for those souls which the purse-proud Orthodox churches seek not. This shall be the life which leads upward."

Then in one sentence he swept together the small joys and interests of their young lives, and cast them ruthlessly into the dustbin, with:

"No dissipation, no frills upon your frocks, no associates among the scorn-

ers—the unregenerate of this world; no reading of foolish story-books, no singing of profane songs."

The shaking old voice stopped.

Champe plucked her sister's sleeve and whispered:

"It'll be awful cold getting up at four o'clock in the morning, along about Christmas. Ask him if we can't have hell in the Winter—and then we'll take heaven in the Summers. Ask him."

Alicia was not listening. She had neither imagination nor sense of humor; in this she resembled her grandfather; but it could not be truthfully said that the programme he had outlined in itself attracted her.

"Couldn't we—grandfather, couldn't we just finish out this term at school, and still go to heaven?" she inquired timidly. Good, studious child, she was on the roll of honor, and expected a prize at commencement. Quick tears of self-pity sprang into Ithuriel Claiborne's eyes.

"Yes," he said, "you may keep on at school—if you adopt the downward way instead of the upward. But I want it understood that I shall, in that case, exert no authority over you. I shall wish it to be comprehended by you both that you are not in my good graces. Come then to your decision. Say to me, 'Grandfather, I choose heaven,' or, 'Grandfather, I choose hell.'"

Champe's gray eyes were black with excitement. Twin spots of red blazed on her cheeks. Her chestnut mane seemed to erect itself and quiver. She looked glowingly alive. Alicia, smooth, demure, plaintively conceding, was the all-too-obvious material for a saint.

"Speak—speak!" urged the old man, with a sharpness born of overstrained nerves. "Heaven or hell. Choose, and choose quickly."

With a last gasping sigh for the story-books of which she was fond, for the school where she stood so well with her teachers, at the early rising which she hated, and the sewing over which she went to sleep, Alicia put out an obedient small hand and sobbed:

"Oh, grandfather! I wish you would lead me to heaven. I don't think I can help you preach, because those people—they aren't—they aren't—Aunt Missouri says they're trash, and everybody makes fun of us. But I do want you to be pleased with me."

Such a half-hearted little convert—and not the one Ithuriel Claiborne craved!

"Very well," he said with what seemed to the child a surprising lack of enthusiasm, considering the tremendous effort she had made. "Go upstairs, Alicia. There rip every flounce and other ornament from your dresses; burn every ribbon, and destroy every satanic story-book which my negligence may have permitted to creep into your possession. Throw away your shoes and stockings. My followers and I have this day decided to walk the straight and narrow way barefoot. Remember that fear is the watchword of safety to the soul. Your sister has not yet made her choice. Now, Champe," and his eyes dwelt longingly on the remaining candidate as his dutiful girl went slowly from the room and dragged leadenfooted up the stairs. The old man measured this fiery spirit, and gauged the assistance and comfort she could be to him, child as she was.

"Champe," he repeated, "your sister has spoken. Make now your decision. Do you want to go to heaven or to hell?"

Champe at that moment seemed to consist mainly of a pair of large, neurotic eyes, a storm-cloud of hair and a few bones that her spirit snatched through life at a lively pace. She regarded her grandfather solemnly. Champe's bargains would always be made on an equal footing with the bargainer.

"Do all the people that go to school go to hell, too?" she asked suddenly. "Where'll the boys go? Where'll Ross Pryor go? You said the menfolks that were going to heaven had to have whiskers. Ross hasn't, but he says he could grow 'em just as easy, if he wasn't afraid I'd pull 'em."

The old man's brow darkened. This

was trivial, even from an eight-year-old.

"Dally no longer, but make your decision," he said almost harshly.

"Well," debated the younger Miss Claiborne, "I want to go where Ross goes. I want to go to school, too. I want to keep my *Æsops Fables*, and I like trimming on my dresses."

"Then you set your face toward hell," he flashed, with a sudden blaze of temper.

The girl tilted her head like an argumentative bird, and looked at him from under thick lashes. She was too used to playing battledore and shuttlecock with the great themes of theology to be daunted by his words.

"I haven't quite made up my mind. I'm thinking," she said.

"You deliberately select hell," repeated the old man doggedly. "That is what those things stand for. A soul consenting to carnal appetites and earthly affections cannot rise. I use no coercion. I give you free election. But when you make that election I exhort you no more. Your wardrobe, your school, your books, your place at table remain the same. I shall nourish your body, but upon your soul must rest the responsibility of its own destruction."

It was evident that the eight-year-old was thinking. The fine brows drew sharply above the big eyes. "If I say I take hell," she debated, "then you'll send me to school, and let me do as I please, and never scold me for it?"

"Who am I to resent the selection of an eternal abode?" the old man spoke with bitter disappointment. "Your words are the words of immaturity, yet the soul is never young nor old. It was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. It has no age. I—I think I have done well. I hope I am right in leaving you absolute freedom."

Pierced in spite of herself by sight of his grief, Champe shook her big mane angrily about her bright eyes. "Well," she said abruptly, "then I'll take hell, if you please, grandpa."

The choice meant to her school, Ross, the cheerful walk home with her com-

panions, the thousand small, dear and real facts of her existence; yet as she looked back from the doorway and saw the old man standing desolate in the comfortable lighted sitting-room, as she dimly realized that he had got, not the disciple for which he yearned, but rather a burden on his hands in Alicia, her heart melted a little.

Alicia—the thought brought solace. "She'll have to get up at four o'clock the whole Winter long," reflected the junior, as she hopped upstairs after a fashion of her own. "She can build me a fire to dress by all the time; and I can eat her desserts when she's fasting. We'll be pretty comfortable, I reckon—at least I will." Thus she hardened her child's heart against yielding, for she also longed to be praised, and the old man's disappointment cut deep.

Alicia had felt, when she toiled up the stairs these dancing feet were making such short work of, that she must seek hard for compensations. And the chief among these was that she would have no rival in sainthood. She knew Champe's choice, before Champe knew it herself. Alicia's halo would be the only feminine one in the household. She was found, fairly content, ripping trimming from her best dress.

"I'll help you," volunteered the junior with unexpected amiability. "Look out! Don't cut that ruffle. I'm going to put it on my petticoat."

Alicia's hands dropped in her lap. Then they clutched the muslin. She had never thought of this. It was barely beginning to be easier for her to renounce her good clothes, the claiming of their sacrificed decorations by this young pirate seemed a drop too much. Aunt Missouri had reared them with strict economy. Their adornments were few and precious.

"I'm going to burn them," she declared suddenly, pulling the garment from her sister's grasp.

"Why not give 'em to me?" demanded Champe. And she added logically: "They'll help me on my downward way—and console me lots. I'm smaller than you, and as long as you've got to go barefooted now, I can wear your

nice slippers and lace stockings. You wouldn't carry a fan—would you? But I'll—I'll need yours and mine, too!" and she burst into open giggles.

Alicia's face was white. "You're a—you're a——"

"You daresn't say it!" cried impish Champe, springing up and dancing about the room. "You've got to hold in now. I'll say all your bad words for you, too—I can say 'em while I'm wearing your good clothes. You ought to be willing for me to have the things—you'll have slathers of gold crowns and harps by-and-bye."

Alicia pressed her pink lips tight together, deliberately unlocked and drew out a drawer, turned its contents into a newspaper that she had carefully spread upon the floor, and gathered up every bit of lace or ribbon, every piece of broken jewelry that slipped off. Champe watched with fascinated eyes. She did not understand, but she was alert.

The elder picked up the four corners of the paper with cold, trembling little fingers. She stepped quietly to the mantel, and possessed herself of the match-safe, but as she reached the doorless, fireless old sheet-iron stove, a pair of wiry brown hands closed over her own upon the newspaper bundle.

"Let me alone," the older girl panted. "I'm going to put every one of 'em in the stove, and burn 'em up with these matches."

"Do you really think so?" taunted Champe in that fiery, overbearing tone which always scared slower Alicia.

"I will—let go—I will!" The saint was half hysterical in her fervor.

"Try it—just try it once!"

Champe, less strong but more muscular, danced about like a mad thing, seeking an opportunity to snatch the finery. The elder retreated, hugging her bundle and trying to protect the matches. She did not slap, nor speak; her saint-hood strong upon her, she embraced her worldly goods in a purely sacrificial spirit, and silently backed around and around the chamber. Suddenly Champe bethought her of her freedom from a lifetime of decent upbringing in the matter of epithets, and broke out:

"You sniggering green-eyed sphinx! You sick catty-pillar! You dizzy lizard! Oh, blast your—your *thighs*!"

Why this last vituperation should have infuriated Alicia beyond the others is hard to comprehend, but it did. She opened her mouth to retaliate, and freed her arms for battle; the matches spilled on the newspaper; Champe, coming on manfully, trod upon their spluttering heads; they flared up with venom.

"I'll teach you to blast people's thighs!" cried Alicia, clutching at her. Champe flung herself backward, and rolled against the stove. That rickety piece of furniture gave out a hollow groan, crumpled its legs under it, and sank down, like an ancient camel offering itself to be mounted. The pipe loosened, casting soot and ashes upon its own head and those of both the girls. Champe pounced at the torn and sooted finery, and hovered over it like a hen, looking up at her elder, who was already appalled by her own fury, and trembling at its results.

"Now," declared the infernally addressed junior, "now the devil'll get you right away. He'll be willing to wait for me, because he knows I'm coming. But you must've made him awful mad, pretending you were going to heaven. *Hooh!* I don't envy you when the light's out tonight!"

Alicia hid her face and sobbed.

"What on earth are you children doing?" came a sharp voice from the door, which Aunt Missouri pretty nearly filled with her ample person as she surveyed the scene of war. Her keen eyes went from the overturned stove to the half-flounceless frock with Alicia's knife abandoned beside it.

"For the land's sake, girls! Did you try to knock down the stove? Are you fighting again? What are you ripping up your clothes for?" she volleyed.

The Claiborne sisters were like a pair of scissors—the blades might swing wide apart, but they came promptly together to cut any intruder who pushed in between them.

"Grandfather told her to," Champe

hastened to explain, when she saw that her sister still wept and would not speak. "She's going to heaven, and they don't wear ruffles there. She chose just now. Let her rip, Aunt Missouri. She—it's her religion."

"Oh," commented the stout, placid woman, entering to put the stove to rights, "she's going to join father's church, is she? Well," and she sighed, "we can't be worse disgraced, and a seamstress charges more for making a dress with trimmings. It takes extra goods, too. Maybe it's for the best." She spoke with mild disapproval.

"But 'Licia oughtn't to burn the things she rips off, ought she, Aunt Missouri?"

The elder sister had dried her tears and gone back to her task with renewed energy.

"You sha'n't wear 'em," she protested from the floor where she sat.

"You sha'n't burn 'em!" flared Champe, brave in Aunt Missouri's certain assistance.

"No, of course you mustn't burn up anything that cost money," said that lady positively. "But you two can join together in piecing a quilt out of 'em."

"A quilt!" echoed the girls in chorus.

Alicia had risen with her renounced treasures in her arms. These members relaxed, and invited the spoiler; but Champe did not advance on the disputed finery. Instead:

"Burn 'em," advised the sinner.

"Take 'em an' wear 'em," said the saint nervelessly, and added under her breath, "a quilt!"

"Aunt Missouri," argued ready-witted Champe, with truly impish ingenuity, "'Licia's going to heaven, and it might do for her to piece quilts; but I'm going to hell—grandpa says so—and I oughtn't to be made to do good things. Besides, you said the other day that it didn't pay to sew old cloth with new thread."

"You mustn't use bad words—little girls mustn't say hell," said Miss Claiborne perfunctorily. "Um-m—yes. Thread has gone up a cent a spool, and I haven't any bastings saved just now. Wind any that you

get out of those things on a piece of card, Alicia. Champe can use them when she sews the stuff on her clothes. You certainly mustn't burn them. 'Wilful waste makes woeful want.' I'd better get back—the servants will strike a light every time I go upstairs at night."

She turned to the stove. When she had it once more on its legs she drew out from the litter which accumulates in such places during the Summer a long, folded paper.

"What's this?" she asked sharply.

"It's mine," cried Champe, reaching for it. "I lost it more than a year ago. I didn't know 'Licia had taken it. I don't think she ought to keep stolen goods if she's going to heaven."

"It doesn't belong to either of you," said Miss Claiborne, getting to her feet. "It's something your father left and your grandfather ought to see. I'll take it. You're a bad girl, Champe, for not telling me of this. Alicia, you are old enough to know better than to conceal such a thing."

The girls gazed upon her open-mouthed. Neither conceived any responsibility in the matter, but Aunt Missouri's scoldings had to be listened to with a respectful countenance. It was a question of putting in about so much time, and saying, "Yes, ma'am," at intervals. Now the good lady, having done by her young charges her whole and complete duty as she saw it, trundled heavily down the stairs. Presently they heard a door close below and a dog snarl, as the mistress of the house rescued a bone for soap-grease.

Without speaking, they began preparations for bed. All quarreling between them was dropped, for with them a thing once decided was not apt to be again alluded to. Alicia conscientiously snipped the bit of lace from her nightgown and tossed it over to the lost one. Champe grinned, tried its effect as an addition to her own little white slip, and stowed it away in a box. Quiet and peace were settling down over the gray old farmhouse. Alicia knelt long by the

bedside. Finally Champe made an end of her preparations and plumped tempestuously down opposite.

"Get up this minute!" cried the elder sister, as though Champe had descended upon a very sore toe of her own.

"What for?" demanded Champe, her elbows planted on the counterpane as she confronted her sister across the bed.

"You can't pray," objected Alicia. "You promised you wouldn't go to heaven. It's my heaven. I'm the one that's going there. Stand up this minute, or I'll make you."

Champe thrust out a limber little tongue, distorting mobile red lips about it, till she needed both for speech. "I'd like to see you make me get up when I don't want to," she remarked. "I've as good a right to pray as you or anybody else. I love to pray—and I will pray—so there! I'd be lonesome without my prayers."

"I knew you'd back out!" shrilled Alicia, using the taunt which she had always found most effective with her sister. "I knew you'd be wanting to sneak around and go to heaven with me."

"I ain't. I don't have to go straight to heaven because I say my prayers. Lots of folks do that and never get there."

"Well, you sha'n't kneel down to do it—I don't think that's fair," whined Alicia, with whom the form of things counted much.

"I guess my knees are my own," jeered Champe, who now saw where the shoe pinched. She tossed back her hair, raised her bright eyes and assumed the expression of a cherub. "They're my knees, and I'll bend 'em whenever I get ready," she said sweetly, closing her lids and joining her brown little palms.

Alicia was fully determined to be a saint; but at this exhibition her just wrath swelled.

"*You sha'n't pray!*" she hissed, and scrambled across the bed, reaching for the loose, flying mane.

"Ow! Leggo!" Champe had a very tender head.

"*You sha'n't pray!*"

The girls had not outgrown the age for scuffling, and tonight their nerves were tense as violin strings; nothing seemed real; they had not yet reached any reasonable point of view from which to survey their new plans of living. Each had one unfair advantage of her opponent: Alicia knew that Champe could not endure hair pulling, and Champe had often succeeded in tickling her sister into breathless submission when mere naïve pummeling failed.

The saint came across the bed like a small fury, and landed with both hands in the sinner's curls. Champe gave a little scream, and then came on; taking advantage of the opportunity which the raised arms offered, she soon had her adversary in a half-hysterical state. Aunt Missouri had failed to close the door when she went out. Struggling, fighting, the two children went through it and to the stair's head.

Below in the pleasant sitting-room where they had made their choice of an eternal future the old man sat with bowed head.

"I'll never take them with me to the preaching any more, Missouri," he was saying, "even if—if I should go again myself. As for this—ah—choice I expected of them, I'm sorry I brought it up," he admitted. "If it were yet to do, I should manage differently. But in the case of Alicia I am sure you will see nothing save good result from it. It may be that her example will even make of Champe such a woman as nothing else could. After all, perhaps it was ordered. I shall ask no decision of them; but—the little girls will be only benefited by their experience of this night. Hark! What's that?"

For there had arisen upon the stair outside a muffled bumping, interspersed with yowls. Before the old man could leave his chair to investigate, this bumping resolved itself into the tumultuous downfall of some ponderable article with, apparently, many corners. The door was violently assaulted; it burst open, and in shot a whirling bundle of arms and legs, of flying locks and switching braids, from which pro-

ceeded the strange shrieks and shouts that had accompanied the descent.

"You *sha'n't* pray!"

"I will if I want to—I'll pray all night!"

"Stop tickling me! Oh—ah—ha! Ha—ha—ha—ha—ha!"

They had scuffled to their grandfather's feet, and fallen there in a kicking mass.

"Do folks pray in hell, grandfather?" wheezed the saint between paroxysms.

"*Haven't* I got a right to say that she *sha'n't* pray?"

"Has a heaven one got any business interfering with what the hell one does?" crowed Champe, her hard little fingers yet keeping up their impish work. "I'll tickle you to death, and then you can go to heaven quick," she added viciously.

Ithuriel Claiborne put his hands over his eyes and groaned. Then he removed them hastily to cover his ears.

"Children—children! I never meant to stir up strife."

At sound of his distressed voice the little furies fell apart.

"There wouldn't be any trouble if she'd just go to hell and let me alone when I'm doing exactly what you told me to, and going straight to heaven," muttered Alicia sulkily, settling her gown about her.

"You said I could do just as I pleased on my way to hell," put in Champe briskly. "And I love to pray. Why, I'd—I'd rather go to heaven than give up my prayers!"

The thin, impractical face reddened with shame as this crude, childish version of his own statements was thus boldly flung back into it. They became suddenly aware of a paper held in the old man's shaking fingers.

"Children," he implored, "be still! Here is something your father left behind for your guidance—and mine. It might be called a will. He instructs

me that neither of you is to be permitted to join any church before you are sixteen."

"Ain't you going to let me go to heaven?" inquired Alicia, beginning to cry.

"Can't I go to hell?" snapped Champe, and looked dangerous.

"Missouri," appealed the old man, "what shall I do? I meant no harm with my suggestions; but perhaps I was wrong. Anyhow, it must all be undone if I am to follow out poor Howard's wishes."

"It must all be undone, must it?" inquired Missouri Claiborne, settling her hands on her hips and looking down at the two girls. "Well, father, if you've got some way of catching an idea, once it's turned loose in the form of words, and any sort of cage to put it in that will hold it, maybe you can take back what you've said; but as for me, I'm only human, and I don't know anything about any way of accomplishing such a miracle."

"It must be done—it must be done!" cried Ithuriel Claiborne. "I consider this paper a will. In it Howard says that if I force, or even permit, the girls to join any church before they are sixteen they are to be taken from me."

Aunt Missouri shook her head.

"You can refuse to have 'em join any church, father," she observed brusquely. "Get up, girls, and go along back to bed—this behavior is ridiculous. You can't do that," she repeated as the door closed behind the two; "but all her life, till she gets old enough to know better, Champe is going to be fixing for—well, you heard what she said. As for Alicia, I don't know as I like results with her any better. You seem to have struck something fundamental in the disposition of both, father, and the Lord won't let you take it back."



THE COMING OF THE TRUTH

By Roland Franklyn Andrews

JOHN SICARD covered the wall space of the chart-house with Poe and Baudelaire, the great tomes of Schopenhauer and the strange verses of Musset. These are greatly different from the libraries of most steamer captains. Once when a Spanish fireman lay ill of a sickness so unknown to the seas that it made him prattle like a very small child, Sicard with a mandolin descended to the evil-smelling bunk and sang softly a crooning folk-song of the Pyrenees. The fire-room watch below had never before heard this song, yet they were glad not to sleep while the captain was singing and afterward spoke frequently of it as they sweated before the furnace doors. This was very different from the custom of steamer captains. And when the *Cortez* lay docked at the Brooklyn Stores Sicard sought theatres where they acted the bleak, Norwegian thoughts of Ibsen or raised grim doubts with the metaphysics of Strindberg. The seeking of such drama is strange in steamer captains.

It was, perhaps, as much because of these qualities they could not understand as of the one quality—his splendid sailor craft—they did understand that the men who directed the Carteret Line were very careful not to bestow upon John Sicard the painstaking social equality they so conscientiously awarded their other captains. He was not of the sort to gain honor in the president's aggressively hearty invitation to lunch. He was master of the flagship. Dennison, general manager, knew this and was the more startled at his glimpse through the chart-house window.

"Captain," he exclaimed sharply, "there's a woman in your quarters!"

"Yes," assented Sicard gravely, "Mrs. Sicard."

"Your wife—I did not know——"

"No," agreed Sicard, "you did not. I had the honor of marrying Mrs. Sicard this morning and I did not notify the Line. She will sail with me this run."

"Sail with you! But an officer's wife aboard ship! The regulations, captain!"

"If the Line considers the regulations inviolable another master can be signed on with only slight delay. Otherwise I shall sail in twenty minutes. . . . Are your cargo ports closed, Mr. Bentley?"

Dennison colored warmly. There were lengths to which even the *Cortez's* finest officers might not go. But the cargo was stored, the passengers were aboard, the pilot was already climbing the bridge ladder. If this was defiance it had such sudden fragrance as to demand consideration at the offices before action. Diplomacy must always be a feature of successful commercialism and diplomacy moves slowly. Therefore Dennison smiled and extended a hand. "Ah, well, I suppose there must be exceptions in the case of a bridegroom," he laughed. "Nothing more wonderful than a bridegroom, you know. Congratulations and a pleasant voyage to you both. The Line would have been glad——"

"I thank you," interrupted Sicard. "Good-bye, sir. We shall make Havana Monday at sunrise."

Dennison on the gangplank wheeled. "Monday at sunrise!" he cried. "Why, captain, you're due late Sunday afternoon."

Sicard bowed. "I know," he said,

"but Morro and Cabañas will be only gray stone then. I wish Mrs. Sicard to see them first when they are pink and gold. It will please her. . . . All ready, Mr. Bentley."

With a hoarse roar the steamer swung into the river, Sicard's graceful blue figure beside the pilot on the bridge. "The man's mad," breathed Dennison, gazing from the pier in fascination. "Wife in the chart-house—Havana hours late. What are we coming to? Yes, his wedding turned his head. He'll find himself in trouble." But the master of the *Cortez*, leaning over the rail, only smiled at the deck cadet, to the great astonishment of that ambitious young seaman, and bespoke the pilot strangely. "Life is worth living, pilot," he said. Whereat the pilot, at this advance of fellowship hitherto denied, was surprised out of his calculations on the draught fee and looked for explanation at the deck cadet, who only jerked an expressive thumb downward at the chart-house. And Sicard, unmindful both of them and of his commander's dignity, sang softly as the *Cortez* plowed her way toward the harbor's gate.

He was singing, too, when the boy third officer came on watch, but shortly thereafter, when he returned from a tour of the saloon, his lips were shut in a straight line and he closed the chart-house door with notable precision. The girl in the deck-chair sprang up at his entrance. Even on shipboard she wore a gown of filmy white, which seemed only to float and twine about her and to radiate in its lacy daintiness something of her own sweet personality. Her head was crowned in soft brown hair, which nestled against the warm ivory of her neck, and she looked very frankly out of eyes which seemed sometimes friendly gray and sometimes luminous blue; eyes of the kind which do not interest in their color because of the surpassing interest in their message. But what Sicard, master of the flagship, saw most was that her back was straight and flat, and that for all her fluffy lacininess she stood erect, as trim and taut as a crack yacht. A moment

he stood in silence, drinking in the dear, new glory of his officer's quarters. Then he took her in his arms. He was an ocean sailor and he read deep in German philosophy, but he trembled.

"Dear," she whispered gently, and the tiny pink palms rested on his cheeks, "dear, you are tired."

Slowly he released her. "No," he answered. "I am not tired. It is not that." He paused. In all things of his own life he disliked the dramatic, and he made his tone commonplace. "He is here," he finished simply.

"He?" The girl stepped back. "On board the steamer? Who?"

"Yes, in the cabin. Brevaine."

"Ah-h," she said quietly. "Why did he come to—to spoil it?"

Sicard seated himself on the transom. "That is what I wished to know," he said. "Will it spoil it?"

The girl came to his side. "No," she answered, "it will not spoil it. It shall not spoil it. But I do not like to have him here—I— Why did he come?"

"Listen," said Sicard, "if I had not taken you out of your home this morning and married you, if I had sailed away and left you both, you would have married him, would you not?"

She twined an arm about his neck. Its perfume and its warmth, the pulsating thrill of its pressure, caught at his senses. "Please—please," she pleaded, "please do not talk to me that way."

"But you would," said Sicard again.

There was silence for a moment. "But you would," persisted Sicard.

The pressure of the arm about his neck tightened. "Yes," she answered very slowly, "I think I should."

"Why?"

"Because he would have made me. He would have laughed and waited and told me that it must be so, and when I said 'No' he would not have minded at all. He would have only smiled and told me that I did not understand, and some time he would have made me believe him, even though I knew it was not true, and I should have married him."

"I knew it," said Sicard.

"Yes. It would have happened."

You would not have been there to take me away and he would have been there always. You are so much alike—you and he, you look at thing from angles so different from the rest of us. It is just as though you looked from the ceiling down. The things you see are new and strange to me, and sometimes I do not understand at all. I think I am a little afraid of you both—only you I do love and I am glad you took me and carried me out on the water in your big ship."

"But he is on board," said Sicard.

"So long as you are here he does not count," she answered. "He cannot hurt us now."

"I do not know," mused Sicard, "I do not know. You women are such fragile things. You are as beautiful as butterflies and as helpless as butterflies in a net. You are creatures of superlative endearment, commanding men sometimes by subtle charm, sometimes even by proud distinction, but in the elements you are without power. You cannot progress; you must be led. You cannot rise; you must be lifted. You may inspire exactly to the extent you fascinate, but you cannot be inspired; you cannot shape your own destiny. You lack the perspicacity, even the physical courage, to find your goal and seek its winning. You are things to be attained and defended because of your very frailty. You are plastic, you must always be fashioned. And here is he and here am I. And he is a man not to be bound or dealt with as other men. I might well pitch him over the side. My conscience would never reproach me, that is certain; for he and I seek the same reward, and that reward is greater than life for which one may kill. I think——"

A small hand pressed against his mouth and his raw philosophy ended in a kiss.

"Do not speak that way," she whispered, pain, almost resentment, in her voice. "You are a very wise man and you have read many queer books and you know how to sail ships on the ocean, but you do not know—girls. You do not know even me."

He drew her closely to him. "You are such a little thing," he breathed, "such a little, helpless thing."

"Not helpless," she corrected. "I have you. I am very strong now."

The simple trust, the childish faith, the small, happy sigh of utter confidence with which she nestled in his embrace were potent eloquence to Sicard. Before their unreasoning conviction his doubts dissolved, his very beliefs lost something of their quality of relentlessness. With her in his arms and the seas to sail could any earthly power prevail against him? A tress of her hair strayed across his face. Her warm breath played about him. Slowly it was borne upon him that he was very mighty and that there was little to fear.

His step on the bridge that night was boyish, and the saloon, straggling on deck after first breakfast in the morning, remarked the youthfulness of the captain's face. Then, at the smoking-room door, in flannels and panama, extracting the extreme of luxury from his slowly puffed cigarette, he met Brevaine. Something of the youth went out of his countenance, something of coldness came upon his extremities, something of the doubts came back to his mind. It was Brevaine who spoke first.

"Good morning," he said, "I believe you are receiving the customary congratulations."

Sicard wasted no time in fence. "Mr. Brevaine," he inquired, "will you be good enough to tell me why you are taking this voyage?"

Brevaine blew a smoke ring, but he met the other's eye unflinchingly. "Can't you guess?" he asked lightly.

"I have no wish to guess."

"Well, then, shall we say it is for my pleasure?"

"Will you say the truth?"

The other smiled. "Why, certainly, my gallant captain, if you must have it. I am after your wife."

Sicard stood silent. "And you dare to tell me that!" he ejaculated.

"Why not? Are you going to be loud—or—vulgar?"

"Mr. Brevaine," said Sicard, "I my-

self believe in the propaganda of the shock, but not even the impressive brazenness of your effrontery can secure its toleration. Are you aware that I command this ship?"

Brevaine nodded.

"And that on the high seas my command is absolute?"

Again Brevaine nodded.

"Then, Mr. Brevaine, I warn you that during your time on board you are not to come forward of the amidships gangway. Do you understand me?"

Brevaine selected another cigarette from his case. "And now," he suggested, "will you have the orchestra sound a few crashing chords? Come, captain, you know I shall go anywhere on this vessel I please. You couldn't prevent it if you tried, because you would give your officers every evidence of insanity if you attempted it, and you wouldn't do it if you could, because you would be making public property of a situation your antiquated ideas convince you must be kept secret. Be reasonable, captain. Try to live up to some of the advanced knowledge you think you have acquired. A parson and a printed book and a witness or two have given you this girl—so you think; so you think because people have been saying so for a few centuries. As a matter of fact, it is nothing of the kind. Nothing has changed. You cannot regulate the elements, and man and woman are elements. Because you win thereby, you choose to abide by the parson and the book and all the smug convention of an artificial state. I don't. And there is nothing to make me. She is mine or she is yours as you and she and I may settle it. You may make law and custom from now to eternity, but you cannot alter the elements. In the end she will come to me because in every way I can make her happier than you with your rough, sordid, sailor life. But don't be a cad. Be a sportsman and fight me for her."

"You beast!" said Sicard tensely.

"Beast?" Brevaine's tone was silken pity. "Beast only because I challenge the standard you let somebody else make for you and dare not disre-

gard. Why, man, the desire of beauty is a morality in itself. How little you really know!"

Each word found its lodgment. All his life Sicard had been an acceptor of theories, theories which he weighed and tested and discarded or retained as thought told him their worth. It is the penalty of the delicately adjusted mind that it lends itself as readily to iconoclasm as to creation. He had long claimed the privilege to think and believe for himself. He had long scorned arbitrary dicta. Perhaps Brevaine, this hatefully jaunty, smiling Brevaine, who spoke with such assurance of certainty, might have enunciated deadly truth. It was the smiting of the returned doubt which made him at evening change the course of the *Cortez* until she swung eastward far out toward the northbound lane. It was its continuance eating even into his craftsmanship which made him drive her back again to the west. It made him for the first time in his career suspect the accuracy of his observation when his noon sight failed to agree with that of his second in command, and it kept him silent in the chart-house where the girl watched him with wide, uncomprehending eyes.

Even her illusive, half-elfin spirit of winsomeness, once his delight, became a cause of alarm because it seemed to indicate a lack of resistive power. He came upon her in the bows gazing in childlike wonder out at the vast space of sea.

"Hark to the water," she said. "Hear it ripple and splash and run away. It has come for miles and miles; and it has been coming for centuries; and now it is trying to whisper to us something of its vague mystery."

"Mysteries of sunken ships and men dying for lack of food and drink, perhaps," he answered unhappily. "Do not trust the sea. Do not believe it. I used to love it and think it a refuge, but I know now it is only a thing to travel over."

"John," she said, anxiety in her upturned eyes, "what is the matter? Tell me what is the matter. People

must be feeling very badly when they don't know that on sunny days the water whispers only pleasant things. Oh, Mr. Brevaine, I didn't see that you had come. Won't you please——?"

But Sicard was swiftly mounting back to his bridge, doubts all aflame. His reason told him that Brevaine's advent had come without her wish and that the girl's greeting had been only the formless, unruffled speech he himself would have desired, but staring at them as they stood together, remembering her confession, remembering the insolent insistence of the man, he could not hold himself in check. His imagination writhed. He paced the platform with slow step, while within him furies galloped.

He brought his vessel into Havana at sunrise. The water was blue as only the great Gulf can be. Morro and Cabañas rose in opalescent splendor. From the Vedado to ancient De Atares the fairy city unrolled in rose and azure and gold. The girl looked upon it in rapture, for who can otherwise view Havana from the harbor at dawn? But Sicard, the captain, with face of stone, must stay upon the bridge, while Brevaine, strolling from the smoke-room, pointed out to her the spire of the Cathedral and stern old La Fuerza, which De Soto built as fortress for the Lady Ysobel before he hoisted anchor to search for the fountain of youth. Sicard said nothing. He sailed three hours before the time announced by the flaming bills upon the Calle Obispo, and in doing this he left behind three passengers for whose marooning he knew the Line would have no forgiveness. But Brevaine, laden with fruits and flowers, mounted the side from a guadiano just as the screw began to churn.

"Don't hurry so, captain," he called laughingly; "you'll reach your destination soon enough."

Across the island sea steamed the *Cortez* to low lying Progreso, where for a day the lighters swarmed at the cargo ports and the passengers excitedly fished for sharks from the

stern. Brevaine brought her hook and line and she took them, wondering at herself that she did so and that his presence brought her no feeling of repulse. Sicard saw, but he gave no word. The doubt had settled upon him. A sailor's life was rough and sordid. Brevaine might be right. There was always that damning possibility that he might be right. He drove his ship to Vera Cruz and rejoiced when he came back from the customs with his papers to give the orders for home. Out of the harbor and into the Gulf he drove with the telegraph set at full speed and doubt in his heart as he paced the bridge. For a time he held his peace. Then at evening, with the trade wind whipping across the decks, he came into the chart-house. The girl sat in his deck-chair as she had on the day they sailed for Paradise from the ugly Brooklyn pier. There were furrows in her white forehead and the look of trouble was in her eyes.

"Are you going to write?" she questioned timidly. "Do you want your chair?" She rose with a flutter of fleecy garments.

Sicard dropped upon the transom. "Our honeymoon, Avice, has it been a success?" he demanded.

Half frightened she sought his face, but in his stony mask there was no kindly guide for answer.

"Yes," she replied in a colorless voice.

"Are you sorry you married me?"

Again she searched his eyes, and again they told her nothing.

"No," she said.

"And Brevaine? He has shared it with us. Do you find his society agreeable?"

It was the cold investigation of the probing surgeon. She looked at him with begging eyes he did not see. "Mr. Brevaine has been kind," she admitted, "and he has not said a single thing. He has just been kind and friendly, even when I have been rude to him, and you—you have acted very cruelly to me. Yes, his society is agreeable, if you like to say it that way."

All that night Sicard kept to the deck. He fought no longer with the doubt. He faced it grimly, but he knew that if he grappled it would overwhelm him. He heard Brevaine's laugh ring in the smoke-room, and he turned away to fasten his eyes on the dim light burning in the chart-room.

Brevaine came out. "Is she still up?" he asked, pointing at the light. "You mustn't let her stay up too late. She must have plenty of rest this voyage." His tone was in itself proprietorship, but Sicard barely winced. It was only a dull blow upon a surface already numbed. He turned away and waited for the day. With its coming he disappeared, for he wished neither to see nor to be seen. Far aft in a passenger cabin he locked himself, staring dully at the wall. The doubt had taken him. He was passive, inert, unfeeling. He neither moved nor thought. Rigid of body, unmindful of all things, of enemy, of ship, of wife, minded only of his hurt, he lay there as the *Cortez*, gay in the noontide, the throb of her screw sounding the lilt of the homeward bound, swept down upon her doom.

Only for an instant it showed, as full under the bows a yawning of the sea rolling before the trade, heaved up the ugly gray flank with its jagged mast stump and gaping hatches. There was a single shrill cry from the quartermaster in the wheel-house, and the face of the boy third officer went white as he sprang for the engine telegraph. Then, full speed, the *Cortez* plunged against the sodden wreck and her bow plates crumpled like tissue.

Crazily the steamer reeled and the gaunt derelict, having dealt her death-blow, slunk away from the shattered stern with the slow malevolence of the murderer she was. The escape roared in agony; the reversed screw lashed astern; the derelict, leering cruelly from the blue depths, sank from sight, but still the stricken *Cortez* lurched forward. The watch below leaped from the companion and aft the labored college songs came to a swift

end. The first cabin, on the promenade, stood erect in quivering silence. The second cabin beneath cried out in sudden fear. The wound was to the very vitals.

Up the bridge ladder sprang Sicard, the gold lac buttons glistening in his snowy uniform, in all but countenance the gilded commander of a gilded ship. The grizzled first was close behind and the boy third officer, hand still on the telegraph, stared at them in ashen wretchedness.

"The bulkhead won't hold," said Sicard tersely. "I know their construction—damn them. The boats, Mr. Bentley."

Even as he spoke there sounded a muffled boom from the depths. A pair of Spanish firemen, pallor showing through their grime, came scrambling into the light. Somewhere a woman, in an ecstasy of terror, screamed.

"O God," groaned the boy third officer, "the sun is shining. The sun keeps right on shining."

Sicard wheeled. "Your boat station," he cried. And as the two sped away, he laughed bitterly. "I wonder if a passenger of the lot has read the station bill," he said. He would have reviled them for the stupidity of their thoughtlessness, but, standing there with the bedlam rising about him, he visualized the solemn notices in the smoke-room with their laborious effort at community. "In case we are obliged to take to the boats," and following with the formal list of duties for pursers, stewards, freight clerks and the like. Even now their ponderous ostentation forced itself upon his sense of the absurd. Short-handed coasters, with hatches to be broken at frequent ports, may pay but scant attention to station bills. He wondered that his cabin staff had the sense to hold back the steerage.

From the deck the chief engineer, who had left ships on the Paternosters and made the Falklands under sail in Winter-time, hailed him.

"Water coming into the fire-room," he growled.

"Boat stations," snapped Sicard,

sounding his bell a second time. And as the yells of the steerage rose louder, "That's the kind of cattle I have to drown with," he said. "Ah, my good friends, you are singularly unclean and I doubt if you have much of souls, but at least we shall know complete democracy—you and I."

Then, as the *Cortez* settled heavily and more heavily, he gazed quizzically upon the uproar below. The blue swells rolling gently toward him sparkled with sunlight; their splash against the sides was soft and pleasant; even the suck of the water through the great hole in the bow was only joyous exultation. In easy poise, careful garb, in power of command, yes, even in his curiously idle concern, he himself was life complete and dominant. And death in the guise of a lazy Summer's holiday was rising up to him.

Once he reached for the whistle pull and checked himself at the futility. On all sides rose the vast horizon wall unbroken by sail or steamer smoke. Of what use to scream at sky and ocean? Again he laughed; but the laugh stuck in his throat as the eye which found the siren lever swept the roof of the chart-house. The chart-house! It had been the abode of happiness and it was going down to the coral. He remembered.

"Pardon," said a level voice behind him, "in this moment of superb theatrics, do you happen to remember that you have a wife?"

Sicard faced about with blazing eyes. Over the same bridge rail leaned Brevaine, his yellow head bare, the inevitable cigarette drooping from his lips, only languor, easy toleration, half-cynical interest in his attitude. "Steady," he urged, with a smile, "the stage setting is quite sufficient. No heroics, please."

"Get off my bridge!" thundered Sicard.

But Brevaine only blew a smoke wreath and watched it float away. "I won't," he answered lightly. "Er—I was speaking of your wife. I can't find her."

Sicard half crouched, his fingers

closing, his shoulders trembling. For a moment he glared wolfishly. Then he straightened, calm and self-controlled. "Effrontery to the last," he mused. "Well, stay if you like. Such discipline as there is left we'll need below. I will even tell you that Mrs. Sicard is in Bentley's charge. He will put her into the first boat."

Brevaine nodded. "She isn't there yet, you know," he said. Then, as his eye traversed the crowded decks, "There aren't boats enough, I suppose? There never are."

"No," answered Sicard hollowly, turning to the crazed steerage. "There aren't boats enough. Most of these people will have to stay."

Brevaine chuckled. "Well, I choose boat one," he jeered. "And you?"

Sicard's face was grim. "I stay with my ship," he said.

Brevaine's mirth rose higher. "You're a fool," he declared. "You're just a silly fool. You've mixed too much hero worship with too much pessimistic poetry. Fine mixture of splendid nobility and sardonic illustration of things as they must be, your going down with your ship, isn't it? Why, my gallant captain, she isn't your ship. She's just old Peter Walker's cargo carrier built to tote cigars and crude sugar and pour money into his pockets, and jolly glad he'll be to collect insurance for her, too—hark—there goes the second bulkhead. She'll be under soon." His drawling voice sped into earnestness. "Go with your girl," he advised almost kindly; "you may keep her from me yet. And man, not all the duty in this world, not all its glories, not all the supreme joys of the life eternal are worth losing the woman you love. Go with her——"

Sicard clutched the railing with both his hands. Aft sounded the rattle of the falls, the hoarse voices of command, the clamor of frightened departure. One of his finger-nails splintered against the painted iron piping. "I—stay—with—my—ship," he repeated, almost whispering the lesson. "I—stay—with—my—ship. Oh——!"

Over the break of the bridge ladder

rose a crown of sunlit brown hair, a white girlish face, a slender neck, circled by its nest of lace. The little hands trembled on the iron rings and the climbing steps hesitated, but the red lips met in a tiny straight line and the eyes, once illusive of tint, were now unfaltering, loyal gray. A moment she clung there, an atom of sheer loveliness centred in the tableau of horror. Then, as she struggled upward, her face quivered in a little sob of relief. Slowly, timidly as a child a-venture in strange places to seek a lost protector, his wife was coming to the master of the *Cortez*.

A flash of white and gold, Sicard darted at her. Sounds came from his throat and the lines in his face distorted strangely. "Go back—go back," he gasped, falling on his knees to seize her shoulders. "Go back—go to Bentley—" he fought to break her hold and pushed her savagely downward—"go back; do you hear me? Go back. Run to that boat. Go back—I command it!"

But swaying in his grasp she only clung the more tightly. "I won't," said a small broken voice, "I'm going to stay with you and your ship—our ship—and," she grieved in something akin to the sweet petulance of her eternal childhood, "I don't think—it's nice—to drive me away."

A great groan burst from Sicard's set teeth. "Go back," he raved, "you shall go back." Then as the gray eyes quessed trustingly to his and the perfume of her hair rose in his nostrils, madness came upon him and he caught her cheeks between his palms. Again and again he kissed her, raining his caresses upon her lips, her eyes, her forehead, upon the soft column of her throat, upon the little hands still clinging to the ladder. The warm flesh quivered at his touch and in the very ecstasy he wept with his torture. "You shall go," he cried, "you shall go back to life. Avise, hear me. Go back to that boat or I shall drive you there. I shall strike you—do you understand? I shall strike you with my clenched fist. I

shall beat you down to that deck and when I am drowning you will hate me—all your life after you will hate me. Go."

But the gray eyes only grew more tender. "You may strike me," she whispered. "And perhaps you may knock me off this ladder—you are very strong, my Jack—but I shall climb back. And if you strike me then, I shall climb back again. And when we go"—she trembled—"you will have to take me in your arms and hold me. I should be afraid in the little boat—and lonely—but I shall not be afraid here if you will only hold me when—when—"

With face ablaze, Sicard drew back his arm. The gray eyes were unflinching. Slowly his fist closed, his muscles grew tense, his breath came in gasps—but Brevaine seized his shoulder.

"Too late," he snarled. "There goes the last boat."

Sicard shot to his feet. The passenger had spoken truly. With her men tugging desperately at the oars, Bentley's little craft was speeding to join the others lying well outside the maelstrom the last plunge of the *Cortez* was soon to make. They were perilously overloaded, their gunwales almost awash, but the ocean's rolling floor was unruffled by winds. The skies were cloudless and the low Florida shores lay only a hundred miles to the west. Cockleshells though the boats might be, they were safety and they were life. Below, the remnant of the steerage, freed now from the stern men, whose leveled weapons had held it subdued in terror, raged horribly as it faced the deadlier terror to come. Men were tearing at hatch covers, assaulting the massive forward derrick, hurling themselves against the deck-house doors.

"A nice fizzle you've made of it," sneered Brevaine. "Three of us left here like rats when we ought to be safe out there. Did you ever write a melodrama, Captain Sicard?"

But Sicard did not hear. His own great voice rang out: "Bentley—

Bentley—stand by." He was dragging the girl toward the rail. "Bentley," he cried. The first officer rose in the stern sheets. The starboard oars caught at the water. The port oars backed. The sluggish craft turned on its keel, gathered way and made for the steamer. Sicard caught the slight form in his great arms, lifted it high above his head, and, as the *Cortez* reeled sickeningly, he hurled her from him out into the depths. "Bentley," he implored, "quick, Bentley."

On rushed the first officer's boat. The white figure sank from sight, rose, its arms outstretched, sank and rose again just in time to be clutched by the bow oar. On the bridge the two men stood in silence. Sicard's breath came hard. His eyes dilated. His fingers opened and closed convulsively. Brevaine frowned.

"Now for the final curtain," he gibed. "You've rather spoiled your picture of the devoted captain, heroically going down with his ship. Do you notice that boat could perhaps carry just one more?"

"Jump!" snarled Sicard.

The other laughed. "No, thanks," he said, "I'm not wanted. The girl is foolish, perhaps, but she has forgotten my existence. She has made her choice, Sicard. You can't circumscribe it with your written laws and parsons and your centuries of solemn conventions, but she has made it here. Be thankful. And when I play a game I play it for full stakes and out to the finish. I'm done. Captain—permit me."

He sprang upon Sicard like a whirlwind. Unnerved, unprepared, the master of the *Cortez* was crashed against the rail and, still writhing in desperation, forced back, until he swung for an instant like a pendulum, then toppled heavily into the sea.

"Bentley—oh, Bentley," called a voice of wild exultation. "Bentley—take one more chance."

And the folk in the overcrowded chief officer's boat, which dashed once

more to the lowering steel wall, battled with a white uniformed man in the water who cursed them as they dragged him in, beat back a drowning Mexican who clutched for the safety he spurned, perceived dimly that the captain's wife had fainted with her arms locked about his neck and, as they pulled madly away, looked back to see upon the bridge a man who only laughed; who balanced himself upon the swaying platform and beat his hands together and laughed.

For to Brevaine it was apparently become a comedy. Awful rumblings within her, the *Cortez* was rapidly sinking. She lurched from side to side, her bow sank lower and lower, she poised for her last rush to the coral beds, but the man on the bridge only made an elaborate bow to the shrieking steerage. "My friends," he said, "my fellow-dogs, be calm. We are about to give further proof of the theory as to the survival of the fittest. We are selected to go because we are of the least value to the world. We are the lowest organisms. We are not needed. We are not wanted. We are about to do the world a service by leaving it. Therefore, let us perform that service decently by keeping quiet."

The steerage in its terror shrieked more madly.

"What, you won't?" cried Brevaine. "This is no fashion to say good-bye to our friends in the boats." He turned his gaze toward the squadron. Very plainly he could see Sicard's white figure, still clasped in the arms of his wife. Very fearfully, he could feel the *Cortez* gather herself with a mighty final heave. "We will salute them," he laughed. He doffed his hat to the distant craft. Down sank the steamer's bow. He grasped the whistle pull. With all the force of the steam behind it the siren screamed. Wild and wailing it roared over the heads of the drowning steerage. And with its last strangling notes Brevaine bade his farewell to the face of the waters.

LA PROIE

Par Michel Provins

Deux frères, André Germart et Jean Vourin, nés de pères différents et par cette origine, ayant dissemblables les noms, les caractères, les atavismes, la mère commune ne leur ayant rien légué qui se puisse comparer, pas même la ressemblance.

Germart, le travail aidant la chance, a été un favorisé du succès; à cinquante ans, maître d'une grande fortune, hautement estimé, il vient de céder une importante industrie pour se reposer, jouir de la vie, et réaliser peut-être un rêve sentimental éclos depuis peu dans son cœur de célibataire.

Vourin a végété, médecin sans talent, marié trop tôt, vivant chichement depuis vingt ans, d'une assez maigre clientèle de quartier; déçu de toutes ses ambitions, d'avenir, il en est arrivé à avoir une âme corrodée par toutes les désillusions, abaissée par toutes les compromissions, bouleversée par une passion implacable: la haine fraternelle. Depuis l'enfance, ç'a été la jalousie contre l'aîné plus intelligent, plus travailleur, puis ensuite l'envie de son succès, de ses bénéfices, et enfin le sentiment de rage allant jusqu'à la possibilité du crime contre celui qui avait aggravé son tort d'être heureux en y ajoutant la bonté. Une seule chose faisait rester Vourin hypocritement affectueux: l'espoir d'êtreindre la proie, d'hériter un jour de ce frère plus âgé et de santé moins robuste. C'était là le but ardent où tendaient hypnotisés tous les appétits de Vourin et de sa femme.

Un soir, Vourin rentre faisant claquer les portes, hurlant un appel pour que sa femme accoure.

EUGÉNIE, *se précipitant, effrayée.*
— Mais qu'est-ce qu'il y a?

VOURIN, hors de lui. — Il y a que ce cochon-là veut se marier!

EUGÉNIE, sachant de qui on parle. — Qui est-ce qui te l'a dit?

VOURIN. — Lui-même... Oui, lui-même!... Il a eu ce culot!... Je ne sais pas comment j'ai fait pour ne pas l'étrangler!... J'ai senti ma tête se perdre, mes mains se crispier, tout mon être

flamber!... Et puis, un coup de volonté a balayé tout ça!

EUGÉNIE. — Il a vu?

VOURIN. — Non... Trop emballé par le récit de son roman!... Tu te rappelles ces deux dames que nous avons rencontrées un jour chez lui?... Nous avions tiqué?...

EUGÉNIE. — Les deux sœurs?

VOURIN. — Oui... L'une mariée... l'autre vingt-sept à vingt-huit ans... encore jeune fille quoique assez jolie... Mlle. Maud de Nizereuil... C'est le sujet... la future Mme Germart.

EUGÉNIE, accablée. — Pas possible que les choses en soient déjà là!

VOURIN. — Elles en sont à des paroles échangées!... Rien que ça!... Étonnant comme on nous a consultés, hein?

EUGÉNIE. — Et celle jeune fille de famille noble?...

VOURIN. — Ne parle pas pompier!... On en a vu bien d'autres, et de meilleure race encore, contraintes par la purée d'épouser de plus vieux rossignols que mon frère. André n'a que cinquante ans, il est amoureux comme un collégien, et une fois bien astiqué...

EUGÉNIE. — Mais sa maladie de peau?...

VOURIN. — D'abord, elle est intermittente... il va admirablement, l'animal, dans ce moment-ci... et ses quelques petites rougeurs peuvent passer pour des feux printaniers. Pourtant...

EUGÉNIE, regardant Vourin. — Il y aurait peut-être là un moyen?

VOURIN. — Oui... pas de première beauté. Mais l'intérêt qu'il y a à ne pas laisser une fortune de famille s'en aller à des étrangers nous fait un devoir de passer sur certains scrupules.

EUGÉNIE. — Qu'est-ce que tu veux faire?... (*Le devinant.*) Aller trouver Mlle de Nizereuil?... Lui dire?...

VOURIN. — Parfaitement!... J'aurai même l'air de sacrifier mon secret professionnel de médecin à une plus haute obligation morale.

EUGÉNIE. — Et puis?... La demoiselle, prévenue, peut très bien passer sur cette légère infirmité de ton frère... pas très visible et nullement dangereuse...

VOURIN, *plus bas*. — Je peux l'imaginer et la démontrer plus que dangereuse... (*Les yeux dans ceux de sa femme.*) horrible!...

EUGÉNIE, *qui comprend*. — L'avarie?

VOURIN. — Pourquoi pas?... (*Un grand silence.*)

EUGÉNIE. — J'ai peur!... Tant de conséquences...

VOURIN. — Tant pis!... Je suis las de lutter... le baigne de la Nouvelle ou celui d'ici, peu m'importe!... Le tout pour le tout!...

EUGÉNIE. — Tu as raison!... Il n'y a que des résultats dans la vie.

VOURIN, *voulant se convaincre*. — Parbleu!... On n'hésiterait même jamais s'il n'y avait pas, au fond de nos sacrées carcasses, des résidus de conscience!... le limon de l'atavisme moral!... Ce que nous sommes arriérés encore!...

EUGÉNIE. — Alors, tu y vas?

VOURIN, *saisissant son chapeau*. — Tout de suite... ça vaut mieux.

Chez Mlle de Nizereuil, Vourin est reçu par Maud assistée de sa sœur Mme d'Avrigné, les deux femmes ayant été surprises et tout de suite inquiètes d'une pareille visite.

VOURIN, *embarrassé*. — Mesdames... Une rencontre trop rapide, ancienne de quelques semaines déjà, ne me permettant pas de croire que vous vous rappelez de moi?...

MME D'AVRIGNÉ. — Pardon, monsieur, nous nous rappelons très bien, ma sœur et moi: le frère de M. Germart?

VOURIN. — Parfaitement.

MME D'AVRIGNÉ. — Et cette qualité est pour quelque chose dans votre démarche?

VOURIN. — C'est-à-dire, madame, que ma démarche n'est pas faite à cause, mais malgré cette qualité.

MAUD. — Je ne comprends pas.

VOURIN. — Oh! je me rends parfaitement compte que le sujet à aborder est des plus délicats, mais il est des devoirs de conscience assez impérieux pour dominer toutes les conventions.

MME D'AVRIGNÉ. — Vous nous donnez l'impatience de savoir! De quoi s'agit-il?... Est-ce que certain projet récemment formé entre ma sœur et M. Germart?...

VOURIN. — Précisément!... Mon frère, pour qui j'ai une affection filiale, et dont je suis le meilleur des amis et des confidents, mon frère m'avait appris, non pas ces jours derniers, mais depuis longtemps, le sentiment profond qu'il avait pour Mlle de Nizereuil... (*S'inclinant.*) sentiment qu'il est si facile de comprendre dès qu'on est auprès d'elle.

Les deux femmes, mal à l'aise, ne répondent pas au compliment.

VOURIN, *reprenant*. — J'ai suivi dans le cœur de mon frère le progrès de son affection, j'ai senti peu à peu combien elle le conquerrait sans avoir le courage de rien faire contre le bonheur qu'il en éprouvait.

MAUD. — Ce bonheur, à vos yeux, ne serait donc pas légitime?

VOURIN. — Oh! tout à fait, si, mademoiselle.

MAUD. — Gènerait-il donc d'autres desseins?

VOURIN. — Aucun. André est absolument libre de ses actes. Ma situation professionnelle, mon âge, mon caractère me permettent de n'avoir rien à lui envier, et je voudrais être un faiseur de miracles pour assurer moi-même, à cet être que j'aime tendrement, la joie qu'il a rêvée.

MME D'AVRIGNÉ et MAUD, *ensemble*. — Il ne lui serait donc pas possible de la prendre?

VOURIN. — Si, très possible, puisque rien ne l'avertit qu'il ne le pourrait pas; mais il ne m'est pas possible à moi de taire une situation que je suis, comme médecin, le seul à connaître. Et c'est précisément pour épargner à mon frère

une révélation qui l'atteindrait gravement que je me suis décidé, après les plus douloureuses hésitations, à venir vous trouver, estimant que, dans certains cas, le vrai devoir—infiniment pénible aujourd'hui—n'est pas dans le respect du secret professionnel, mais dans le respect de la vie d'autres êtres que l'on tient à sa merci.

MME D'AVRIGNÉ, *effrayée*. — Expliquez-vous plus clairement, monsieur. Il y aurait donc dans la santé de M. Germart quelque chose?...

VOURIN, *vivement*. — C'est cela!... Je voudrais que vous puissiez me comprendre à demi-mots. Au moins vous, madame... car, devant mademoiselle, il m'est impossible de dire...

MAUD, *très animée*. — Je suis plus à l'âge de la femme qu'à celui de la jeune fille, et il me semble que, devant une allégation aussi grave, j'ai le droit de savoir?...

VOURIN. — Je préférerais, en tout cas, que madame votre sœur vous traduisît plus particulièrement les termes généraux dont je dois seulement servir. Il s'agit d'une maladie... ayant pu, dès la jeunesse d'un homme et souvent à son insu, empoisonner son organisme, maladie qui reste ensuite dans le sang, malgré des guérisons plus apparentes que réelles, et qui... née d'un rapport physique, communique par un autre rapport... et à une autre femme la contagion primitive... contagion terrible pouvant atteindre les sources mêmes de la vie.

MME D'AVRIGNÉ, *bouleversée*. — Je comprends, monsieur.

MAUD, *frémissante*. — Et moi je connais assez déjà du mal qu'on entend pour, sinon comprendre tout à fait, du moins avoir l'intuition de ce que vous dites. C'est affreux...

MME D'AVRIGNÉ. — Il est impossible que M. Germart ait ignoré?...

VOURIN. — Il n'a jamais été soigné que par moi, et cette ignorance où je l'ai laissé, que je veux toujours lui garder, a été ma constante préoccupation. C'est ce qui vous explique ma démarche si tardive... Il a fallu le fait certain de votre projet de mariage pour que je juge, très douloureusement, je vous le ré-

pète, auquel de mes deux devoirs je devais obéir.

MME D'AVRIGNÉ, *convaincue par son hypocrisie*. — Pardon, monsieur, d'avoir eu d'abord quelque méfiance... Nous devons vous être très reconnaissantes de votre pénible démarche.

MAUD, *les larmes dans les yeux*. — Certes!... Mais brusquement, tout ce que vous venez de détruire en moi!... J'aimais votre frère si complètement bon, si supérieur!... et malgré ce que vous dites...

MME D'AVRIGNÉ, *avec un cri*. — Tu es folle!

MAUD. — Peut-être!... oui... Je ne sais plus!...

VOURIN. — Vous êtes libre, mademoiselle... J'ai simplement dégagé ma responsabilité.

MME D'AVRIGNÉ. — Je vous réponde, monsieur, que ma sœur ne passera pas outre.

MAUD, *venant se jeter dans les bras de sa sœur*. — Sans doute, je t'obéirai... Mais tu ne peux pas m'empêcher d'être profondément émue et très malheureuse.

VOURIN. — Je voudrais au moins pouvoir parler à mon frère du merveilleux sentiment que vous avez pour lui... Et pourtant, cela aussi, il faut que vous m'aidiez à le taire... pour lui... parce que nous l'aimons... parce qu'une révélation le tuerait!...

MAUD, *courageuse*. — Je suis prête, monsieur... Puisqu'il faut lui faire l'une ou l'autre peine, cherchons la moindre.

VOURIN. — Ne pourrait-on pas imaginer qu'au moment de la décision définitive, vous avez réfléchi toutes les deux... que la grande différence d'âge, que certaines... influences de famille... et aussi (*Perfide*.) la crainte que l'opinion juge intéressé un tel mariage vous ont déterminés...

MME D'AVRIGNÉ, *vivement*. — C'est cela!... Et ce serait nous qui vous aurions convoqué...

VOURIN. — J'allais vous le proposer. Il sera moins cruel pour mon frère que je lui apprenne avec tous les ménagements (*Larmes dans la voix*.) la fin de son pauvre rêve... Pardonnez à mon émotion... J'ai eu du courage jusqu'ici!

MME D'AVRIGNÉ, *qui s'y prend, lui tendant les mains.* — Mon cher monsieur! Vous êtes un honnête homme!...

Avec la modestie simple de l'homme de bien et l'effusion discrète de l'homme de cœur, Vourin, après quelques phrases entrecoupées du meilleur effet, prend congé des deux femmes et file chez André Germart. Sans aucun des ménagements annoncés, jouant toujours avec lui le bourru bienfaisant, il explique que ces dames l'ont fait appeler, qu'elles retirent leur parole et sont parties en voyage.

ANDRÉ, *sûrexcité, extrêmement pâle, redisant toujours.* — Quoi?... Quoi?... Ce n'est pas possible!... Pour quelles raisons?

VOURIN. — Je te les répète pour la dixième fois: la différence d'âge... les influences... la crainte de l'opinion.

ANDRÉ. — Elles connaissent tout cela avant... C'est impossible!... Il y a autre chose!... (*Venant se planter devant son frère.*) Il y a autre chose, tu entends?

VOURIN, *s'agaçant.* — Ah ça! Est-ce que tu t'imagines que tu es bien séduisant au point de vue physique, et bien remarquable au point de vue santé?

ANDRÉ. — Santé?... Qu'est-ce que j'ai?

VOURIN, *l'idée du crime fusant dans son cerveau.* — Qu'est-ce que tu as! Qu'est-ce que tu as!... D'autres ont pu s'en douter?

ANDRÉ. — Se douter de quoi?

VOURIN. — Tu m'embêtes!

ANDRÉ, *le saisissant.* — Vas-tu parler à la fin? Je veux savoir!... Je sens bien qu'il y a quelque chose que tu ne veux pas me dire.

VOURIN. — Tu devrais peut-être m'en remercier.

ANDRÉ. — Il me semble que tu mens... Regarde-moi!... C'est toi qui m'as toujours soigné; si j'avais une maladie grave, il y a longtemps...

VOURIN, *mauvais.* — Tu vas m'en vouloir de t'avoir épargné!

ANDRÉ, *frappé.* — Epargné? Cette fois, je te somme...

VOURIN. — Regarde-toi dans une glace!...

ANDRÉ. — Quoi?... (*Subitement.*) Ces taches de ma peau?...

VOURIN, *féroce.* — C'est le poison qui sort!... Voilà ce que je ne voulais pas dire... Tu es pourri!...

ANDRÉ, *la voix étranglée.* — J'ai?... J'ai?...

Il porte ses mains crispées à la gorge, et s'écroule, foudroyé par une attaque.

Vourin, l'exaltation tombée, le cœur chaviré cette fois, regarde le corps qu'il vient d'assassiner par l'âme et s'enfuit. Dehors, peu à peu il se calme; la passion de l'intérêt redomine la bête peureuse un instant vaincue. Il se rend chez le notaire de Germart, à qui il raconte l'affreux accident qui vient de lui ravir son malheureux et bien-aimé frère.

VOURIN. — Je venais vous mettre au courant... comme je suis son seul parent!...

LE NOTAIRE, *tranquillement.* — Oui, mais vous n'êtes pas son héritier.

VOURIN. — Plait-il?

LE NOTAIRE. — Il y a dix ans que M. Germart m'a remis un testament instituant légataire universel, pour le cas où il mourrait célibataire, son ancienne maîtresse, Mme Léonie Vernier.

VOURIN, *la tête perdue, oubliant devant qui il parle.* — N... de D... ! J'aurais mieux fait de le laisser se marier... Il n'aurait peut-être pas eu d'enfants!...



OBSERVATIONS

A WOMAN'S sympathy is the pathway to the door of Matrimony.

ENVIRONMENT is a sculptor who shapes the clay of our lives.

IN these days men always love wisely, but never too well.

STELLA LEEBURGER.

LIFE

By George Sylvester Viereck

THOU art the quick pulsation of the wine,
The laughter and the fever and the doom,
Skull crowned with roses, malady divine,
Dweller alike in cradle and in tomb!
Thine is the clangor of the ceaseless strife,
The agony of being and the lust,
But Death, thy bridegroom, turns thy heart, O Life,
Whence thou hast risen, to the primal dust.

As one that loves a wanton, knowing well
That she is false, I yield me to thy spell.
But when my cup is foaming to the brim,
Yea, when I dream that I have clasped the prize,
I see the scythe and mark the face of him
That is thy lover leering from thine eyes.



HIS LITTLE GAME

"WELL, ho, here!" surprisedly ejaculated a tourist from the North, in the midst of his perusal of the village newspaper. "Who ever heard anything like this before? The editor of the *Weekly Clarion* says, here: 'Miss Gladys Mae Sprawl, daughter of our esteemed fellow-townsmen, the Hon. Jefferson D. Sprawl, and one of our most beauteous splashes of social splendor, entertained the ladies and gentlemen of the Belles and Beaux Club in her sumptuous parlors last Wednesday evening, when bright the lamps shone o'er fair women and brave men, as the poet so aptly got off. Miss Gladys Mae's captivating countenance was all aglow with the light of hospitality, and her cerulean blue eyes played havoc with the hearts of more than one of the assembled gallants, who unanimously declared her as beautiful as a rosebud kindled into bloom by the kisses of starbeams. Whatever the event may be, the hour always seems more lustrous when she mingles her graceful girlhood's glowing charms amid the assemblage, and her legions of friends only meet to join in their admiration for her peerless personality.' Whew! In the name of wonder, what is the matter with that editor?"

"Nothing but brains!" replied the landlord of the tavern at Polkville, Ark. "That's wisdom, not flapdoodle, no matter how it may look to you. He's owing her father considerable money, and every time he prints a rap-sody—I reckon that's what you'd call it—like that the old man buys a lot of extra copies of the paper to mail to kinfolks, and credits the amount on his account. And the editor is slowly but surely paying off his debt with adjectives."

TOM P. MORGAN.

AN ALTAR TO AN UNKNOWN GOD

By Olivia Howard Dunbar

THERE was no alternative to hospitality under the conditions in which Janet Bristow lived. So the unknown visitor, presenting himself at the little flat at twelve o'clock in the morning, had to be shown directly into the room where Janet sat engaged in the sophistical self-deception of mending for her husband. She by no means accepted the doctors' cool calculations that Tracy would get well, though these helped her to be outwardly calm, to "keep up," as the nurses said. Her vague belief was that illness was a thing to be combated by semi-magical means, and she was sewing for Tracy now because she hoped that the assumption implied in all such simple little provisions for his future might act as a spell, supernaturally bridge over the danger. If she refused to show that she was frightened, the Fates might reserve their catastrophe for a weaker victim. Yet her defiance of her unseen intimidators would have been more formidable, as she knew, had her stitches been neater. They were getting coarse now, and inconsequent, for her fingers trembled. The atmosphere of the hospital, that she hated so, stayed with her, between her visits, like a chill fog. She would have gone to warm herself but for the visitor.

It was Tracy, of course, of whom the good-looking, alert youth, described in his note of introduction as "Mr. Ainger, of the *Star*," was in search. So once more she repeated, with dignified brevity, the story of her husband's sudden illness and removal to the hospital. Beneath his civil sympathy the young man betrayed a distinct

personal chagrin. It was unfortunate, he hinted delicately, for Mr. Bristow as for himself, that the crisis of the illness should have coincided with this shocking news of the death of Daniel Crewe.

"Oh, why didn't you tell me?" Janet cried out, her small, dark face rigid for an instant. "Daniel Crewe! Daniel Crewe!"

"Indeed you must forgive me, Mrs. Bristow. I supposed that you had read of your friend's death in the morning papers——"

"He was my husband's friend, not mine," she said quickly, laying a curiously insistent emphasis on the distinction. "So it does not matter. I mean the news is not a grief to me personally, so you need have no compunction. It will be a grief to my husband—and, I suppose, to the rest of the world."

Whatever emotion had seized her had promptly passed and she had relapsed into the apparent listlessness that her anxiety had laid upon her. All her force was needed, now, to *wish* hard, for Tracy to get well. She could not spare a pang for the death of Tracy's old friend—could not have spared it, had her own knowledge of him been kinder. She half-listened to what Ainger was telling her.

"It must have happened a week ago, although the news has only just come. You know he was in Turkey."

"Yes."

"Oh, of course you must know so much more than that. I wish you would tell me, Mrs. Bristow"—the youth leaned toward her with honest eagerness—"do you really know the

main points of Crewe's life? Enough so that you could say about him what your husband would have said?"

Janet smiled a weary smile of reminiscence. "For publication, I suppose you mean? Then you do not know that Mr. Bristow would have told you nothing—nothing? Not as much as I have already told you, even? Again and again this has come up, whenever Mr. Crewe entered the country, or left it, or published a book, or sprained his ankle, and I assure you Mr. Bristow has never uttered a syllable. You are too young to know all this. But you can see——"

"Oh!" Ainger's sharp inflection showed sufficient understanding. "All that, you know, Mrs. Bristow," he went on dauntlessly, "was very well while Crewe was alive. He hated publicity. Well, it was a picturesque whim for a great man—his friends respected it. But you can see that the same scruples that they had—that Mr. Bristow had—will now take, naturally, a different form. Every newspaper and magazine will be filled with Daniel Crewe. The duty of his friends will be to see that the published stuff is accurate. The forbidden becomes the legitimate. Mr. Bristow is too experienced a writer not to realize that. Your husband was Crewe's closest friend, was he not? Why, of course, you know all about it—his boyhood, his college life, his love affairs—was he really such a Lothario once, Mrs. Bristow?—why he chose to be a recluse, and so on."

"I see," said Janet slowly. "But if Mr. Bristow should feel as you suppose, he will doubtless give you what you want when he gets well. I am sure he will be able to see you in two weeks or so."

"But you can see that the *Star's* offer would not hold good for so long."

"The *Star's* offer!" repeated Janet. That word always flashed fire across her dull reckonings. There had been few periods in her life with Tracy when the need of money had not been a bitter ache; just now it was a peculiar torture.

"What I came for," explained Ainger, "is a full, authoritative article from Mr. Bristow. Of course if we wanted merely gossip, we could get that with no trouble. But for the solid thing Mr. Bristow would do, with all the facts in it, the *Star* would pay five hundred dollars."

The poor woman grasped the sentences in inverse order. It was the "five hundred dollars" that violently seized her heart and set it beating. The conditions that preceded it her ears reached after only vaguely. She ventured a flash of calculation. Five hundred dollars would—would pay the household bills, see Tracy through his illness, buy Bobby's coat——

Ainger could not look at her face; her need was written on it too frankly. So he went on, with affected ease:

"Of course the editors did not foresee this unfortunate case of not being able to get at Mr. Bristow. But I am perfectly sure, I will guarantee you, that the same price will be paid for the same facts if you will give them to me instead."

"Perhaps I should not be able to give you just what you want," said Janet, after a little, in a choked voice, "and wouldn't that be—too large a price?"

Ainger pretended judicial consideration. "I think not," he said. "I believe we paid Mr. Bristow twenty-five dollars for a little article he sold us the other day. You can easily see that the market value of this would easily be twenty times as much. Suppose we begin now, Mrs. Bristow. I don't ask you, of course," he explained, blushing, "to tell me about the unpleasant parts, the—women and all that. I suppose Mr. Bristow wouldn't have spoken of that, either. But you talk naturally to me, please, and I will write. And we would better begin as far back as you can go."

The agreeable youth, with whom she felt already on such sane, friendly terms, had taken an attitude of elaborate receptivity, but Janet sat motionless, looking away from him, a cloud upon her eyes. "There is a letter from him—from Crewe—on my hus-

band's desk," she said finally. "It came yesterday. I don't see how I can talk to you about him with it lying there, without knowing what——"

"Womanish!" shot through the boy's pity for her. "Then I should suggest that you open it," he urged patiently.

She rose and after a longer interval than seemed necessary came back with a thick, square, smutty envelope, addressed in a small, self-contained, extremely civilized hand. Ainger's eyes fastened on it with the hunger of the news-gatherer. "You haven't opened it?" he asked briskly.

"No. How did you happen to make me think that I could? I have no more right to open it than you have. It is not my letter." She stood, frowning, fingering the envelope.

"Very well, then." Ainger darted free of ethical snares. "Let us go back to the college days. They knew each other first, then, at Cambridge?"

"Oh, I can't tell you!" She sank down in a chair with a sign of infinite fatigue. "Please forgive me for not having said so at the beginning. But I did not feel how it was till I sat at my husband's desk a moment, just now. Quite the last thing I should wish to do in the world is to take advantage of his illness to misrepresent him. I believe you said—you knew—my husband?" Her voice trembled a little.

Ainger called up a picture of a bearded face, narrow, unyielding. "Oh, yes," he said cheerfully, "I know Mr. Bristow slightly."

"He has a very—rigid sense of honor," she stammered out painfully. "I know that it would seem to him disloyal—what you propose. To me the idea seems reasonable—so it is of no use for you to try to convince me." She half-smiled at him in a charming way that she had, after all, not quite forgotten. "You see it is not I who refuse you. It is my husband."

Ainger was silent a moment. He was a very young reporter, but already he had found his own humaneness a professional inconvenience. He wished that he did not perceive Mrs. Bristow's frame of mind so completely.

"Don't mind, Mrs. Bristow," he said boyishly. "I'm not going to press you, because you're suffering enough anxiety already. But you are wrong, believe me—you are dead wrong. You couldn't do the faintest bit of harm to anybody by giving out a straight fact story. You could probably do good, instead. However, I want you to think it over. Other men will probably be here to see you. Don't see them—or don't tell them that you know anything. Think this out by yourself—and I'll call you up this evening to see how you feel about it."

He did not mention the money again. That temptation was already written in scarlet in Janet's cheeks. Doubtless he was a traitor to his paper, not to have bullied the poor woman into "talking." But that thought did not yet afflict him. What scorched him hottest, now, was the monstrous knowledge that had come to him of the helpless woman's poverty.

Janet hardly saw him go. But she heard, with a shivering sense of finality, the quick sound of his feet on the dark, dusty stairs outside. Opportunities always ran away with that firm, hurried step. She had watched them, listened to them, many times knew their slow, hazy approach, their loud, brisk, irrevocable departure. So far as she could perceive, Tracy had never once, through his glasses, been able to detect the advance of one of those seductive wraiths—though, with her, he had always beheld, grimly and silently, its definite, its almost material withdrawal. These unhappy memories, so uncompromisingly alike, strengthened her. They meant that the pleasant boy's departure, with his magical offer unfulfilled, must be right. It was so like the things that usually happened, where Tracy had a hand in them. And Tracy was always darkly, obscurely in the right. She believed that.

Bobby came in from school and she sat down to luncheon with him. Bobby was well and sound, in spite of his deprivations, and had wholesome tastes in food, she reflected, as she watched

him. That was her doing. She had been a good mother in that sense. But she must not fail him in higher things; she must be a pattern of goodness for him—oh, nonsense! she grimly interrupted herself. If there were only Bobby, she would beg for him, steal for him, without a scruple. She had no very vital belief that Bobby profited by ethical hairsplitting on her part. If it were not that Tracy, with his cold virtues, which she was now so awkwardly and painfully emulating, was dearer still—Bobby should never have precociously known what it was to be a little hungry and not quite warm enough.

The child caught something of the ache of compassion in her face. "What makes you look that way, mother?" he demanded.

"Because you were taking such large mouthfuls, darling." Janet automatically recovered her maternal alertness. "I think if you tell me all about your play this morning you won't be able to eat so fast and it will be good for you—don't you think so?"

Bobby poised his spoon in a stubby hand and smiled up at her. "Yes, I think so, mother," he said, a little shyly. Then he started in, with a firmer voice: "You see, it wasn't what I wanted to play at all, but Stephen Barnes marched right up to me the first thing, and he said, 'Look here, Bob Bristow——'"

No more was necessary. Bobby was well launched. His mother continued to smile toward him without hearing a word. Something was beating, beating in her brain, and she had to listen to it. And it was such a hard, insistent tumult. Its loud, feverish throbs demanded why she had refused money that would have fed her gaping need. Well—it had been to satisfy a hypothetical scruple of her husband's. But ought she not to have bought his comfort at the expense of his scruple? It was possible; but the certainty she could not have until Tracy himself should be well enough to give it her—for in all the universe poor Janet had no other court of righteousness. She

had even grown to feel that it was more comfortable to have a human, an incarnate standard of goodness. One could plead with it, dispute it timidly, and if one chose, in trivial matters, evade it. But one could scarcely, having no other, live without it. Ah, if Tracy were only here now, so that she might laugh at him, beg him to abandon the absurdly artificial attitude she was now stubbornly holding in his stead. She might be able to induce him to relent a little; it had happened, once or twice. But to herself, alone, frightened, unauthorized, she dared not capitulate a hair. It was, of course, wonderful that Tracy could always preserve so inflexible a morality, whatever happened to herself and Bobby. But then, that was his part in the family division of labor—to be the guardian of moral issues; Janet's was to keep the housekeeping bills "down" and improvise respectable clothes for Bobby—through Bobby's chatter, she tried to think it all over again—not on abstract grounds, of course, but in strict relation to her strongly passionate desire not to harm Tracy and to have him approve of her. It was useless. She could see nothing but cold refusal in Tracy's blue eyes—Bobby's were brown and sparkling, like hers, and she hoped he would not know so many profitless renunciations as his father had. In the end it was one more injustice, this loss of the money, for which Crewe was responsible. They might all shiver and starve, but Crewe's vain whimsy should be served. It was perhaps as well that he was dead.

Tracy, of course, had always denied that it was mere vanity, the strange man's insistence on secrecy. But her husband's extravagant devotion conceded no faults to its idol. It was true that Tracy could well afford to flourish the banner of loyalty; his own had been complete. From the time that they had first roomed together as freshmen until that last meeting in New York when Tracy sat up all night to help Crewe with his papers before sailing, theirs had been, on the lesser side at

least, an unsullied friendship. From the bare, uneasy stool of his unsuccess Tracy had always reverently contemplated the throne of the other's greatness. With the difficulty of disposing of his own hackwork always oppressing him, Tracy would superfluously boast of the fact that every publisher in England and America was swift on the trail of Crewe's genius. When the two men were together it had always been Tracy's part to protect his friend from importunities, to shield Crewe's sensitive skin, to cast himself before Crewe's careless feet. In return, it had always seemed to Janet that Crewe gave grotesquely little. Oh, of course, he had always offered money—but Tracy found no difficulty in withstanding that shining lure, in resisting the least golden drop of his friend's overflow. On such occasions as the matter had come to Janet's knowledge, he had explained to her that he saw no certainty of repaying Crewe and that under such circumstances "borrowing" was indefensible. And even temperamentally, it seemed to her, Crewe had no rich treasury of gifts to draw upon. He communicated no good-fellowship or buoyancy and always left Tracy wearied and inert. It was monstrous, his willingness to devour Tracy's strength, to make base, selfish use of that incorruptible loyalty. There were endless instances; and there was the monumental one that he had years ago tried, unforgetably, to prevent their marriage, hers and Tracy's. Unforgetably—yet Tracy had forgiven him.

But it was fruitless, recalling this old bitterness; particularly fruitless, with poor Tracy lying ill. She must save her strength to send him through her eyes, her finger-tips, when she should see him. She must not squander it on matters that were already decided, rescues that were already withdrawn. It would be a help, of course, if she felt some sense of stability, of reassurance after her sacrifice. But she was conscious of none. Would these things have been clearer and easier for her, she wondered dimly, if she had cultivated an independent vision—if, for

instance, Tracy had not discouraged, so long ago, her going to church? She had once found gentle reinforcement in a preacher, now and then. But doubtless that sort of thing was for the people whose moral difficulties were luxurious and superficial; it was not even designed to be serviceable in such cruel crises as she had learned to know.

Half an hour later she was stealing through silent aisles of suffering to the bed where Tracy lay. She had not wanted him to be brought to the house of pain; she could feel no gratitude for the care that these dispassionate women—some frivolous, some severe, she distrusted all of them!—could give him. Each time that she came she resented more hotly the self-conscious system of it all, the wide airiness, the publicity, the sinister odor of disinfectants, the cool smiles on the nurses' faces. It seemed to her a challenge to nature itself to expect anybody to get well in a "ward," with draughts—she was sure there were draughts—sweeping rudely by, and other sick people intrusively near, and no love to lean toward or cry out upon. Janet believed in darkened, well-heated sick-rooms, where people whispered and shed tears.

The head nurse encountered her and laid an imperative hand upon her arm. "He seems to be resting a little, Mrs. Bristow. Perhaps it would be better for you not——"

Janet put eager, despairing questions. No, they insisted, he was not worse; and to prove it, showed her a "chart" from which she could make nothing. But they discouraged her seeing him, that was the significant and cruel thing. It scarcely impressed her that they professed to hope for different symptoms in a few hours. She believed they were simulating an entirely false cheerfulness; that they secretly believed Tracy would die. And for her there was nothing to do but hoard her little hope of him and creep back a little later to beg to see him—him, who was her very own.

Outside, she had a curious sensation of having lost her usual ready faculties.

She was not sure of her direction; and she read, without being able to comprehend, the signs upon the cars. She dared not take one, in her agitated state, and walked home, a long, windy, dusty mile. There was no doubt of it; the black catastrophe was very near. When she had seen that little Bobby was safe at home, she would go back again and they would tell her that—

What had caused it? Was it Daniel Crewe, again? Was he, from the dim borderland whither he had betaken himself, demanding a continuance of the intimacy he had so long fed upon? Was he evilly drawing Tracy to him? Or was this a penalty imposed by the unseen forces for her contemplated betrayal, that very morning, of her helpless husband? She had been faithful; but not without weak wavering. Perhaps she must make a further peace. She paused in her blind walk and rested her clasped hands on a stone coping. "God! God!" she said, under her breath, her hands clenched passionately. "Make him live for me! Oh, make him live!" She dared not put her offer into words. But what she meant was that if her husband were kept from death, she would continue to conform absolutely to his kind of goodness—and to the God that made such goodness valid and rewarded it. She would sacrifice herself, her child, as she had already sacrificed the money that would shelter and feed and clothe them—she would pay any price for Tracy's life.

When she entered the little hallway of her own apartment-house a man with a bunch of newspapers in his overcoat pocket was pacing its absurd length. He stopped her, introduced himself as from a well-known weekly, spoke the name of Daniel Crewe. Janet felt a mysterious new firmness. How had she ever been able to dream of selling Tracy's reputation? From her tumultuous thoughts a precise little formula took shape. "Mr. Bristow is critically ill. It will not be possible to obtain any information about Mr. Crewe until Mr. Bristow is better." Again there was the murmur of an

"offer," but Janet thought it unnecessary to listen. She bowed a civil dismissal to the tempter and hurried upstairs.

At the top Bobby was waiting for her, his eyes full of the wild, mysterious dreams that a quite commonplace little story-book had given him. Beyond was the wide, satisfied face of the uncouth Greta, who had triumphantly preserved a fragment of a telephone message from Ainger. The telephone was on the ground floor, and without taking off her hat Janet ran down the four flights of stairs. She would thank the nice boy and show him how incorruptible she had become. She feared she had not shown him how earnest she really was to follow Tracy's wishes, to preserve his honor. But the youth had a project to present of which his editors were serenely ignorant. He wanted, he said, to buy an option on her information. He would send her a smaller cheque than the one they had spoken of, and when Mr. Bristow should be better, when her own frame of mind should be better adapted to it, she should give him the narrative that meanwhile she would withhold from other publications. But Janet checked him so easily and bravely that he was half deceived, and admitted the possibility of having exaggerated her need.

The night that followed was for the lonely woman a black stretch of clammy fears, inexplicable sounds. Every hour there was the relief of learning from the telephone that Tracy was no worse. In the waiting intervals, which Janet spent wrapped in heavy blankets, with a tiny, ghost-dispelling flicker of gas beside her, there was the solace of Bobby, breathing sweetly in his sleep; and the colder comfort that she had been sternly faithful and that Tracy would perhaps—he was so just, so punctilious!—get well to reward her. Money, after all, could be replaced—at least theoretically. But there was no atonement for a lack of loyalty. She was innocently content with what she had done.

Early in the morning came reassurance. There was every reason to

believe, the hospital people said, that the danger was past. Mr. Bristow was sleeping now. She might come to him at noon. All the way upstairs she cried softly; then stole into Bobby's narrow bed and crept close to his warm little body. In his sleep he flung his arms about her neck. Warmth came back to her limbs and she trembled with joy as she held the child to her heart. Ah, she had them still, her husband and her child, and she was worthy of them. Her sacrifice had been rewarded with, she was appalled to see, what miraculous promptness. After this they would all be in understanding, she and Tracy and—was it the Person they called God?

The morning mail held business letters for Tracy, letters she considered herself privileged to open. Each contained the sinister name of Daniel Crewe. Janet looked at them ruefully. If Tracy were well and—like other men—or if she herself were not on this new plane of action, this slippery field of moral ice, what a fortune they would be making, they who were penniless. It was a dangerous thing to think about. She put the letters in Tracy's desk and since she could not sleep, for the little flat seemed so choked with the fears that were not yet swept out of it, she went to refresh herself by a walk in the park. At noon she arrived at the hospital and met her own physician at the door. He held out his hand to her. "The best of news for you, Mrs. Bristow," he said warmly. "It has been a bad case, I'll admit, but he'll get well quickly now. Yes, there's no reason why you shouldn't go in to see him if you don't stay long."

Several heavy weeks had to pass, however, before Bristow could be taken home. Janet, aflame with her new courage, discharged Greta and found that she was able to do, in the evenings, work that a women's industrial bureau would accept and pay for. Her needle almost sang as it flew in and out of sheer white substances. She would always be able to help, after this. Bobby would be proud of her, some day. And once she dared ask

herself if she were really as inferior to Tracy as she had always believed.

The news of Crewe's death she had not been able to withhold, and she felt that silently as he had borne it, it had heavily smitten him. They had scarcely spoken of it together, but that was merely in accord with their old habit of avoiding the man's name. It had never been comfortable or natural to talk of him; there was too much to explain, to extenuate—it was better to ignore. But when the sick man should be quite strong again, when he should have recovered from the shock of his friend's loss, Janet knew that she would sit by him some day and tell him what she had done, what renounced—and why. She would be able to smile at it all, then, to tell him how cruelly absurd she had thought it to refuse the money; but how she *had* refused it for his sake and because she knew he would think it the good and true thing. She knew how he would look at her, then—a little surprise, all approval; and how he would nod at her and pat her hand. It would be her "Well done." And it was all she wanted. But she thirsted for it.

Janet was a little concerned when the first of Tracy's friends to come after the ban upon visitors was removed was Dering, editor of that estimable and inconspicuous weekly, the *Bulwark*. Fearing the effect of too much "shop-talk" upon her husband's weakened condition, she determined to stay with them and deftly block their conversation if it should seem necessary. Meanwhile she withdrew silently with her sewing to the obscurest corner of the little room. In the one sunny space sat Bristow himself, his feet wrapped in a rug, medicines all about him. His attitude indicated no resentment of his weakness; almost, rather, a complacency in the temporary importance his illness had conferred upon him. It was as though, long balked of the recognition his egoism cried for, he was willing to seize upon the least legitimate excuse for the distinction, the deference, he was otherwise unable to command. Bristow's temperament

would have found its keenest joy in despising fame, in rejecting adulation—as Crewe had done. What he, instead, was ignominiously obliged to withstand was a not too ardent pity; people wondered, without caring very much, why, with his very considerable intelligence, he had not more solidly succeeded. This was what Bristow wondered, too; but Janet, in her own most secret consciousness, did not wonder; she compassionately knew.

Her feeling now, however, as she bent her smooth dark head over her sewing, was one of affectionate apology. Dering had known Tracy a long time; she hoped he would not mind. Yet, without looking up, she was perfectly conscious that his movements were restless and that his civil monosyllables were not definitely related to her husband's insistent narrative of the details of his illness. But Tracy could not be checked. His voice took a high, womanish wail. This suffering and nearness to death had exalted him, lifted him apart; Dering, who was sound, wiry, physically commonplace, should be made to realize it. For all her eyes' intentness, Janet had nervously taken a wrong seam. She began patiently to take out her microscopic stitches.

Dering had at last interrupted his host by sheer violence. But poor Janet found little relief in the introduction; it had to do with Crewe. It was too soon, yet, for Tracy to know what had happened. She must listen vigilantly, be alert to prevent.

"Ten years more," Dering was discouraging now, in his level, fluent, professional fashion, "and the man would perhaps have had his say. One of the few original, vigorously productive men we've had—why, he should have been chained, kept under glass, till his work was done. There's that last tremendous novel of his—only half finished; and the other work planned, his publishers were telling me yesterday, for five years ahead. Except yourself, Bristow, I find that there are strangely few men who feel a personal loss in Crewe's death; queer, secretive

chap he was. But it's a terrific loss to letters—terrific."

"Crewe was a very great man," said Bristow piously.

"The world agrees with you. That's the idea, generally—he'll be ranked among the first."

"There's been a good deal published about him already, you say, Dering? Of course I haven't been able to read——"

Janet let her work fall to the floor. Tracy must not know yet what they had tried to wring from him—and from her. She could wait much, much longer for his praise.

"Oh, quantities." Dering's tone held infinite disgust. "There's nothing they haven't dug up about him. Very little that is authoritative, I should judge—all manner of haphazard stuff. The critical things are beginning to appear, too. Crewe's death has been a godsend to the space-fillers, I can tell you. It has seemed a pity, rather, that there wasn't someone to come out at the very start with a good, dignified story of his life—such as you could have given, Bristow. . . . A great pity. The biography will set everything straight, however. Dangerfield's already at work on that, they tell me."

From her gloomy corner Janet, tense and trembling, broke out:

"But Tracy wouldn't have done it, you know, Mr. Dering. He felt—he felt——"

Bristow squirmed a little.

"Why, how's that?" asked Dering.

"You know that he has never once——" she began, her proud little head lifted high.

"My dear, I beg your pardon," her husband interrupted her, "but you can scarcely understand how the matter stood—stands, I mean." He reached out, took a draught of dark medicine from the table, and lay back again. A new quality in his muffled, abased voice gave Janet an incredible forecast of what he intended to say. "What I had thought of mentioning to you, Dering, is that I suppose I know more about Crewe than anyone else that has survived him. I know the man's

story from boyhood, and I know the drift of his work, artistically. Now—naturally—he—well, he would be perfectly willing to have the things said now that he didn't wish to have said while he was alive; one can understand that, of course."

These were the words that the boy from the *Star* had used. And now it was Tracy himself who was urging—and urging timidly, a little shamedly—Oh, she could not, could not listen!

"So partly by way of correcting false impressions," Bristow continued, "how would you like an article for the *Bulwark*, a biographical sketch that should serve as a kind of interpretation of him? I should want to sign it, of course, to give it authority. And if you were in a hurry, I could give you the copy in a few days—dictate it to Mrs. Bristow."

Bristow's eyes were greedy for his friend's left-over glory. Thus at last he might gain his true stature—as Crewe's interpreter. Janet looked stonily at her husband's pale, darkly bearded face. For the first time she saw its hard, small eyes, its unimaginative forehead. Yet there was still a calm, angelic pity in her for the man

ignobly suffering behind that pallid mask.

"M'm." Dering was obviously uncomfortable. "Well, you see, Bristow, I'm afraid we've already given up all the space we can to him. We've had two or three personal sketches and for the critical study we thought we had to have a 'name,' so I got Scott Weir to do it. Comes out next week. Good of you to suggest it. If it hadn't been for your confounded illness— Well, good-bye, Bristow. You seem to be in lots better shape than I hoped. See that he's careful, Mrs. Bristow. I'll run in next week."

Bristow mustered an unnatural smile of acquiescence; and a trace of it was mingled grotesquely with the look of irritation that he gave Janet when she returned to the room a moment later.

"My dear," he said, "I can't help feeling that you muddled things a bit with Dering. It's always so much better if women don't interfere in that sort of thing. I'm perfectly able to manage it myself—perfectly."

"Yes, dear." Jane rearranged his rug carefully. "I'm sorry. Don't you think you would better take some of the tablets now?"



THE SUDDEN SHADOW

By Maisie Saville Shainwall

IT seems strange Death should come to him:
 Life was his heritage, and Love;
 He never strayed in pathways dim—
 How found he that far shadowy grove?
 How trod he fields of Asphodel
 When 'twas the Rose he loved so well?

He heard the brother-call of Earth,
 He wandered far in foreign lands,
 And every friend's hearth was his hearth,
 And every friend, two outstretched hands.
 Was Death his friend, too? That may be—
 Death welcomed him so tenderly!

ONE DAY

By Grace Duffield Goodwin

IN fields close gilt with buttercups
I found a violet;
Its tiny petals half-unclosed
With early dew were wet.
O happy field of buttercups,
O dearer violet!

In all the years of rich content
Whereof you never knew,
I found one little fragrant hour
Impearled with memory's dew.
O happy years of deep content!—
O dearer day with you!



CHOPPING HIM OFF

BORROWBY—I had the pleasure of meeting your wife and little boy the other evening, Grimshaw. By Jove! that's a great kid; chipper as a squirrel, bright as a dollar, and—er—speaking of dollars, can you let me have twenty, old fellow, till day after tomorrow?

GRIMSHAW (*coldly*)—Don't slam the door as you go out, Borrowby.



WHEREIN IT IS VALUABLE

“A REPUTATION for truthfulness is a valuable asset.”
“Yes?”

“Yes, indeed. It enables a man to lie so effectively.”

THE BROWNELLS

By Ruth Kimball Gardiner

IN the case of Robert and Elizabeth Brownell something more than the sound of their names suggested Robert and Elizabeth Browning. The marriage of the Brownells was ideal. It was more than a marriage; it was an institution, a landmark, an unanswerable answer to cynicism. It was a power in Gordonsville. Society was shaken when Fanny Watson divorced her husband, but there were the Brownells. The Watsons were unimportant bricks somewhere in the structure of the social arch. The Brownells, its keystone, held it firm.

Admittedly, the secret of the Brownells' success lay in themselves. Other husbands and wives possessed as many material helps to content, yet remained merely married, not mated. Julia and Fred Boice had been far more demonstratively devoted as lovers. Fred had knocked out stars with his head, he said, during their engagement, yet the second year of marriage found him unmistakably treading firm earth, while the Brownells, at no time interfering rudely with the motion of the planets, still dwelt among them.

Their acquaintance had been made among the stars. Robert had returned to the State University to receive his master's degree at the Commencement which made Elizabeth a bachelor of arts. The high note she sounded in her graduating essay harmonized with the clarion call of his thesis. In both young people dwelt the same desire for a life lofty in purpose and beneficent in influence. They were, as they soon came to phrase it, kindred souls. They married among the stars, one

may say. Many marriages are celebrated there. The ascent is wide and easy, the descent therefrom so narrow that two cannot walk abreast. One must precede the other, and since neither Robert nor Elizabeth stepped first, they remained where they were.

Julia Boice was Elizabeth's class-mate, and had her glimpse of star-land, too. They were married at about the same time, and Elizabeth, coming to Gordonsville a bride, found Julia her nearest neighbor. Elizabeth's son and Julia's first daughter were born in the same Spring. The expectant mothers made baby-clothes together, and over nainsook and Valenciennes they reached an intimacy no association in classrooms can give. But even at this time Julia's feet were nearer the earth than Elizabeth's. She was often tired, and not a little afraid. She had no clearness of mind to devote to the books of preparation for motherhood which Elizabeth read so diligently. In the evenings she lounged on her sofa with a novel. She was not exalted. She was merely dulled, and nainsook and Valenciennes were enough to think about. She slid through the period without appreciation of the high and sacred import of it.

Elizabeth devoted herself, whole-souled, to her duty. She made an effort to surround herself with beautiful pictures, she heard the best music, she studied, and Robert read to her great poems and essays of lofty appeal. She was conscious of an exaltation of spirit, and she strove to endow her child with a serene mind no less than with a healthy body.

Her son lived two months. His death was a tender grief, not the heart-breaking severing of an accustomed tie, and it strengthened the bond between her and Robert. Comforting each other, they drew nearer each other, and nearer the earth.

Julia's daughter was followed by a son a year later, and after an interval of two years, by another. Gordonsville looked at the Boices approvingly, but it lifted its eyes to the Brownells. Elizabeth had no other children. She was her husband's adviser and counselor, his right hand. Julia, awake late with a teething baby, more than once saw them walking home, arm in arm, from a concert or lecture. They were discussing their impressions. Julia was walking the floor and worrying over the exactions of her maid-of-all-work, and in her attic dust gathered on the books which she and Elizabeth had once studied together. Elizabeth had passed to other books.

It came to be a question in Gordonsville how much of Robert's success in the law was his wife's and how much his own. She was president of the Fortnightly Literary Club, and its members saw Robert's mind in every paper she read, every question she decided.

"I'd like to know what she'd do if she had three children and couldn't afford to keep a nurse," Julia sometimes said to herself. "She couldn't put so much thought on Browning if she had three to mend for."

But Julia never uttered such heresy openly. She was even glad of the helpful things Elizabeth said at the Mothers' Meetings, when she could find time to go to hear them, for she admired Elizabeth. For herself she had no great desire to be able to understand the cases she heard Fred discussing with Robert and Elizabeth. He never brought business home, he said, but he spoke of Elizabeth to his wife as an admirable helpmeet for a young lawyer.

Elizabeth was ambitious for her husband, and gratified when a wave of reform swept him into politics. She

went with him to the State capital, and enjoyed with him the symphony concerts and the classic plays which Gordonsville could not offer. His colleagues admired her and forbore to smoke in her presence. They spoke to their wives of her rare insight. A man with a wife like her, they said, would go far. And in answer to their wives' questions, they said, it may be:

"What is the party going to do? Oh, you wouldn't understand if I told you. Isn't dinner ready yet?"

In time Robert, still a very young man for so much success, was elected to the National Congress. Elizabeth planned delightedly for the Winter in Washington. She had always been a well-dressed woman, and she distrusted Gordonsville sartorial standards. Robert was too much occupied to leave Gordonsville before the opening of Congress, so Elizabeth went to New York alone. They had never been separated before for longer than a week. Elizabeth was in New York a month.

"You will want to see everything," Robert said before she left him, "and you cannot go about alone. I shall write to Jim Franklyn to look after you."

Franklyn had been a classmate of Robert's, and was a stockbroker. He had visited the Brownells once, and they had liked his alertness, his interest in the world's affairs.

Elizabeth regretted that the commonplace consideration of dress must interfere with her liberty to enjoy to the fullest the intellectual opportunities of the great city, and she was glad of a guide who knew his New York so well. She had never visited it before.

Franklyn had many friends. He knew the people of a polite bohemia whose atmosphere was delightful to Elizabeth. She had feared the narrowing influence of Gordonsville. These new acquaintances talked more lightly of great things than she had expected, but their very lightness was proof of their familiarity with the movements, the schools, the new philosophies which Gordonsville had at

second hand only. It was a writer of poems she had admired, who suggested her first box-party to Franklyn. She had mentioned her liking for music. It did not occur to Elizabeth to ask beforehand the name of the entertainment. It was an extravaganza.

Elizabeth had not the mind which is insistently conscious of its own purity. She had none of the puritan's readiness to be scandalized. The scantily clad chorus suggested nothing more to her than gaiety and high spirits. The antics of the scarecrow were extremely funny to her. She laughed childishly, till her sides ached.

Robert's next letter contained these words:

I am so glad you are going to hear some music. I heard "Lohengrin" the first time I went to New York.

Elizabeth looked about her, and perceived that she had strayed from star-land. Measured by "Lohengrin," the extravaganza was merely cheaply amusing, tawdrily pretty. Robert would not have laughed at horse-play. She did not mention it to him when she wrote. His reverence for her must have suffered a hurt if he had known she could so forget herself in the delight of watching buffoonery.

She was a little distressed; but Franklyn lived in this New York. She could not ask him to step out of it, and he was so kind. He knew pictures, and he knew architecture. There was much to learn from him. She did not wish to seem to criticize his taste. Furthermore, she was enjoying herself more than she confessed even to herself. The life of cafés, the pageant of Fifth Avenue on a crisp Winter afternoon, the vastly different procession of Broadway, the nooks and corners of old New York, of foreign New York, of financial New York, of dazzling, incredible, electric-lighted New York, the spirit of all the New Yorks in one, caught her and thrilled her and held her. Franklyn brought her popular books to read, took her to see popular plays, and talked to her of the things New York talked of for the moment.

At the end of the month Elizabeth

climbed back to star-land a little shaken, a little apologetic, a little ashamed. Here and there, in the account she gave to Robert of her visit, there was a hiatus. Impossible to confess to him that she could enjoy one of the six best-selling books of the week, a banal song, a purposeless play. Robert could not understand these things. They were not included in his ideal of her, his ideal of life.

It was inevitable that life in Washington should interfere with their preoccupation each with the other. Robert was a success in the House, Elizabeth a success in society. She had always worked with him over his speeches, advising, suggesting, copying. Now she served him in a wider, less intimate way. The mechanical work of his correspondence, his speeches, was left to his secretary, a dainty, fluffy, deft-fingered little creature, unintellectual, but soft-voiced and feminine. He spoke often to Elizabeth of the girl's competence.

Elizabeth was proud of his success, and he of hers, but now his success was wholly his and her success wholly hers. She never failed to hear him when he addressed the House, and he went with her to dinners and receptions. She was dimly conscious of living up to him.

Franklyn wrote to her now and again, for they were very good friends. In one letter he referred to her laughter over the scarecrow. Elizabeth was glad the letter came when Robert was not at home. They had always read their letters aloud to each other, and she had never mentioned the scarecrow of the extravaganza. The enormity of the thing grew on her. One day in Robert's presence a visitor spoke of the extravaganza which was then in Washington, asking whether she had seen it. Under the look of amusement Robert flashed at her—Elizabeth to care for a thing of that sort!—Elizabeth lied, panic-stricken.

In the next week she heard Robert humming an air from the piece, and her heart stood still. She had lied. Where had he heard that song?

Doubtless in the street. Certainly he had heard it in the street. It was whistled everywhere. She had lied to Robert. He must have heard it in the street. There was no other possible explanation for his familiarity with it. He had been with her every evening of the week before. And on Wednesday afternoon he had been kept at the Capitol till late. Certainly Robert had heard that song nowhere but in the street.

They were at home alone that evening, and Robert read "Pippa" to her. It was one of his favorites. She listened. He was reading to her. They were not reading together.

Elizabeth went back to Gordonsville in March alone. Robert had been appointed a member of a commission to investigate a matter which had engaged the attention of the public for months. A "Congressional jaunt," the press called the commission's journey. Elizabeth was glad to be alone to readjust herself. Gordonsville must mean starland again when Robert came home. She and Robert must stand side by side once more, she no longer living up to him and listening, but one with him.

She had never regretted her years of childlessness, for she still saw in her vision of the future Robert's sons and daughters about her, but the house seemed empty of more than Robert. She enjoyed talking with Julia about little things. Julia had seemed to her always lovable but commonplace. Now Elizabeth was conscious of no lack in her. Julia, who had expected to be awed by this Elizabeth of the wider experience, found her a sympathetic companion.

"She talks so interestingly about Washington," she told Fred. "I think she has been too busy to read much there. She's going to show me how to do my hair that new way."

Elizabeth had been at home three weeks. She was sitting in her library reading one of Robert's favorite books when Julia came, running stumbingly, to stand between her and the news they were bringing. Robert had died suddenly.

Elizabeth's calm is still spoken of in Gordonsville. The young clergyman who spoke with her went away silent. She had seemed not to hear him. He had long comforted himself with the Brownells' marriage. It was one of the world's few perfect ones, he felt. He had spoken words of consolation to many bereaved wives, feeling in his heart that the violence of their grief was the unconscious confession of duty ill done, now forever past remedying. Elizabeth was so still. She had been a perfect wife. Love like hers and Robert's, he felt, could endure even death. A little absence, he thought, and then hand in hand again for all eternity.

"O Death, where is thy sting?" rang confidently from his lips above the dead Robert.

Elizabeth was very still. Her wish to be alone was respected, and day followed day. She came and went about her small tasks calmly. She was not bearing her grief, for she was still numb—numb with a numbness she clung to, for she could not bear Robert's knowledge that she had sinned against the perfection of their love. If Robert knew, why, then she was more dead to him than he to her, for the Elizabeth of his ideal had never lived. She unpacked Robert's belongings as if he had sent them home to await his coming. The papers from his portmanteau she placed in his desk, ready to his hand. There were the letters from her, written during that month in New York, and during the few days' stay Robert had made in Gordonsville in the Winter. They were worn with many readings. She destroyed them fiercely, and searched to make sure she had them all. She wished to destroy everything she had ever written to him, even the few letters of their courtship, for the early Elizabeth so reproached the later Elizabeth.

In a portfolio she found a long-sealed envelope.

"To be destroyed unopened," Robert had written on it. Her later letters he had not so endorsed. They were

merely tied with tapes. These, the letters of that divine earlier time, kept always with him, he had wished to protect from the profanation of stranger eyes. She could not destroy them without knowing that these were indeed what she sought. She opened the envelope. These letters, too, were worn with re-reading.

"Dear, dear Rob," she caught a beginning.

After that, for a long time, only detached sentences, phrases, here and there, had meaning to her.

"How I miss our long talks!"

"There never was a friend like you."

"I am counting the days till you come back . . . did laugh so at the matinée . . . so good to me."

The disjointed fragments separated themselves from the body of each sheet and stood out before her.

"I am so proud of the little book you sent me . . . my dear, best friend . . . the flowers are so beautiful."

An unformed but clear handwriting. Elizabeth had seen it often. In every curve it spoke of the fluffy, dainty little woman who had been Robert's secretary. She had no need to look at the tiny photograph in the fold of one letter. The large, childish eyes were

directed a little upward. She had always looked at him so. The letters were ingenuous, impulsive, naive. There was no hint of evil in them. Robert was her dear, dear friend, nothing more, and she had concealed nothing. It was not in Elizabeth to misinterpret them. There had been no cheap intrigue. There had been only something which Elizabeth had never given him—Elizabeth, who to him had always stayed in star-land; Elizabeth, whom he had loved, and whom he had lived up to. To breathe an air less rarefied had comforted him.

Elizabeth rose from her chair, the letters in her hand. Through the window she saw Julia and Fred on their veranda across the street. Fred was showing her something in a comic paper and they were laughing. These letters Elizabeth would keep. An unspeakable comfort, a limitless desolation came to her. She was no longer numb. She stretched out her arms to Robert, feeling for the first time his abiding presence, seeing for the first time with understanding eyes.

"O Robert!" she said softly. "We have always been so lonely together—till now!"



PHANTOMS

By Edith Summers

SILENT and strange and dim, like ships that slide from the shadow
Over the path of the moon, and mingle again with the darkness,
Thoughts most dim and strange, o'er the moonlit path of my musing
Vanish into the night—and I know not whither they journey.

A TRIUMPH OF TEMPERAMENT

By Kate Masterson

IT had been a mild Winter, but a storm raged in the heart of Miss Myrtle Van Dyke, a show-girl with lines in the successful operatic spectacle, "Miss Magnolia," now in its fourth month on Broadway.

With the tiger of her spirit well in leash she reclined on a cushioned couch, drawn before the flickering gas-log in the sitting-room of her small apartment. It was a dark noonday and she read, half-aloud, portions of "King Lear," which had been recommended to her as a voice exercise since she had achieved a speaking rôle in the success.

Just then her chum and dearest friend, Vera Cameron, blond and piquant as Myrtle was dark and sumptuous in type, came in with a breezy entrance effect that she had made a specialty of in private life, even at funerals.

She kissed Myrtle rapturously on both cheeks and sank in a beautiful pose in a big chair, loosening her furs, while Myrtle smiled silently at her.

"How cozy you are here, Myrtle!" she bubbled. "How homelike it is! Not a bit like Madame Delmonti's fourth-floor-back where we used to cook on the gas-jet!"

Myrtle gazed sadly at the gas-log, throwing down the book and drawing the violet kimono she wore more closely about her.

"Oh, I don't know," she said without a particle of feeling; "it's a good deal of a bother!"

"Why, it's just the loveliest, most artistic place!" gasped Vera; "and you were the luckiest girl to get it from the Davidson-Gores! How they must miss

it, out on the roads with one-night hotels to live at!"

"I wish they'd come back today and take it off my hands!" complained Myrtle, wrinkling her brow. "I'm just wild to get back to one room and a trunk somewhere!"

"Why, Myrtle, how can you? I'm sure you have your bath ready every morning and your chocolate in bed!"

"Not often," said Myrtle drily; "this morning I did a twenty-five minute sketch with the gas-range. You see, the maids won't stay, and a place like this has to be looked after and dusted every day. And then the bills!"

She reached over to a little joke of a desk and took a bunch of pink papers from it which she handed to Vera.

"There," she said tragically; "just glance over those."

Vera began reading the items, with upraised brows: "Grape fruit, forty cents. Celery, thirty. Cream, twenty-five. Chickens, two dollars. Gracious! But, dearest girl, don't you know better than to trade at Blinkem's? They charge higher prices than any place in town. Only millionaires can go there!"

"What is one to do?" asked Myrtle. "They have a telephone and they send the things in boxes just like violets!"

"Oh, you've been ordering over the 'phone, too! Why, you must never do that! You should find some nice Italian fruit-stand right in the neighborhood and pick out the things and beat them down in the prices!"

"I never could do that," said Myrtle

crossly: "I haven't any domestic talents."

"Then let the maid do the marketing."

"I tell you the maids don't stay more than a day or two! I can't imagine why."

"Look here, Myrtle, you haven't been feeding them on this sort of stuff, have you?" And Vera again scanned the bill. "Perhaps you don't give them enough to eat."

"They have just what I have myself," began Myrtle haughtily; "isn't everyone talking about servant troubles? The other day Chlorinda was washing and I thought to please her by having new strawberries and cream for luncheon. What do you think? She walked off as though she were insulted and left all the things in the bluing! I had to have the janitor up. Oh, I'm so tired of it all!" And Myrtle turned melodramatically and buried her face in a cushion. "Besides," she sniffed, "I have to cultivate my voice now and I can't bother about such things!"

"Cheer up, little one," said Vera gaily; "the trouble with you is, you have too much temperament!"

Myrtle raised her hand deprecatingly palm outward.

"Oh, yes, you have," went on Vera; "Hankins the other day said you had. That's why he gave you those lines! And people with temperament can't keep house. Look at Bernhardt and Duse and all of them. I tell you what we'll do——"

"Yes?" Myrtle raised her head like a drenched flower after a rainfall. What she heard had revived her a bit.

"I'll come over and keep house for you! Yes, I know you've asked me to come; but I felt with your temperament you might be better alone. Then, of course, Dicky takes me out to dinner a lot, but Dicky's going into vaudeville and leaves tonight for the road. So do not weep, Myrtle. I'll buy your flowers."

"You will? Dear Vera!" She gave Vera her hand caressingly; "You are such a comfort!"

"And I'll get a good girl right away, and we'll fix it so she'll stay. I know where there are lots of 'em! But harken, old pal, you'll have to feed them better. Oh, yes! Po'k chops and cawn bread and gravy—I know how to manage them! Plenty to eat and a little music now and then!"

"Music?"

"Yes, music! You see, their trouble is temperament, too. People with temperament are easy when you know how to handle them right. Now, a darkey likes a cheerful place and a little music and plenty of steam heat!"

"Why, Vera!"

"Yes, even so, and when I return with one and ring three times, pretend you don't hear at first and ripple out a little rag-time. Then open the door with business of hearty laughter. By the way, is there any food in the ice-box?"

"I think there's a French artichoke and half a Camembert cheese," reflected Myrtle; "and there may be some Bar le Duc."

Vera fastened her furs with a flourish. "Now recollect," she said; "three bells is your cue for a burst of merry music. By-bye! Be good!" and she went breezily out with a laugh over her shoulder and a nod.

Myrtle rose and trailed her violet robes to her dressing-case. She peered steadfastly into her own eyes, and then began dreamily to rub some cold cream into her chin. Then she puffed out her hair at the temples.

And so Hankins had noticed that she had temperament! Yes, she knew it, and that was why he had given her the lines. Well!

She took four strides forward and three to the right. Then, raising her hand in a welcoming gesture, she repeated in deep, stogy tones:

"Welcome, our liege, to Magnolia Land!" Then with a commanding wave, "Music!"

A sweeping bow, two steps right and five half-backward, and the second great speech in higher tones.

"Comrades, our prince salutes you. Bring flowers and wine and rarest

viands to greet his majesty! Away! Away!"

Then the tripping exit, looking back over the shoulder.

Ah, well, no doubt, though life was sad and difficult at times, she had her beloved art! Vera, now, was different! She would marry Dicky and do a sketch with him in vaudeville, while she, Myrtle, would rise step by step—until she became a star!

But she would always be kind to Vera! Vera was not a genius, but she had a certain *chic*, and when she led the girls in the Crocodile ballet out in the last act it made the audience laugh. Poor Vera! She hadn't even one line.

Just then the bell tinkled and Myrtle, remembering her rôle, rushed to the piano and struck up a lively air. Then she went gaily to the door, where Vera, winking one eye discreetly, ushered in a colored girl all a-grin, with a purple hat and her arms full of bundles.

"Welcome home!" began Vera delightedly as they all passed into the tiny dining-room. "This, Myrtle, is 'Manda, who will look after us, cook for us and help us to keep down expenses. Won't you, 'Manda?"

The girl grinned joyously in answer to Myrtle's smile.

"Already," went on Vera, "we have been marketing! We have purchased the luscious chop, the tender broiler, the sweet potato. We dine home tonight and in the morning we have corn muffins and maple syrup. Dost like the picture?"

And, 'Manda, all smiles, went into the kitchen to find her way about alone as Vera guided Myrtle into the sitting-room, speaking in a half-whisper:

"You see how easy it is, Myrtle, when you understand, is it not? Now you just watch the bills decrease. I found the loveliest Italian place only half a block away—a dark, dashing brigand under a long, low, rakish awning! He has temperament, too! I pick 'em out every time. They'll give you everything they have if you just pet them up a little!"

The two girls hugged each other, forgetting Delsarte and all the rest of it as

the odor of fried chicken filtered out to them. And at the early dinner that afternoon under the green-beaded shade the two girls really were happy before they started for the theatre.

"I haven't felt so much at home since I left *Terre Haute*," exclaimed Vera gladly. "Have some more salad dressing. It's good for your voice!"

"Is it really?" asked Myrtle, who dieted for her voice now. "I must be so careful, you know!"

"Sure! Don't all the opera singers just live on oil?" demanded Vera. "But I wouldn't take black coffee, if I were you! It's bad for the upper register! Isn't 'Manda a treasure, though?"

And 'Manda beamed upon them like a black Bacchante.

Then set in a time of real comfort and happiness for the two girls. 'Manda, fed to the danger point, sang and whistled over her work and waited on her two missies like a slave. She made them waffles and coffee that threatened to destroy Myrtle's slenderness, and caused Vera to rejoice that crocodiles were largest round the waist.

She was a household genius, was Vera, and she marketed every morning until Myrtle's wonder grew at the delicious fruits and fresh, tempting vegetables and salads that came up each day in the dumb-waiter, the bills ridiculously small.

Sometimes a pineapple or a box of dates was tucked in the corner of the basket and was not mentioned on the bill.

"How funny that is," said Myrtle one day, when Amanda brought in two big tomatoes, and it was Midwinter. "How can that poor man afford it?"

"It's an Italian custom," explained Vera. "Besides, you forget I told you in the beginning that Tony has temperament!"

Later on, the secret was out. One day after a *matinée* the two girls hurried home through the dusk for dinner. Myrtle was very low in mind. Hankins had told her she must throw more abandon into "A-way! A-way!" He had also said something about sticks. And Vera had had her salary raised! She comforted Myrtle.

"Don't you care, pard! It may not all be true!" she rattled on. "Let us stop at Tony's and get something nice for dinner! That's my plan! Whenever I feel sad I eat a lot!"

Myrtle, half-dazed with hurt pride, went with her to the stand. The awning was drawn up and there were heaps of tropical color, green and gold and amber. There was the fragrance of Southern strawberries and the tangy scents of oranges and pine.

Vera called out in a rather saccharine voice, peering down a cellar doorway, "Ton—ee! Ton—ee!"

And in a flash, like a figure in a pantomime, a lithe young Italian bounded from underground somewhere, it seemed to Myrtle's theatre-sodden brain. He was slim and smiling, velvet-voiced with eyes like coals, and gleaming white teeth.

He burst out in musical, rapturous, welcoming broken English. It seemed to Myrtle that it should be set to music. Vera's voice almost purred as she went on picking things out, indicating them here and there with a white hand, Tony following her directions with wild enthusiasm as she glanced now and then at him under the brim of her hat.

Suddenly Myrtle became aware uncannily that there was music in the air—the sort that one cannot hear but is only conscious of. There was magnetism in the atmosphere. The lights seemed to reel and the stand changed into a grove in the twilight.

The breeze caught the edge of a cabbage-leaf and she thought she heard it rustle. The parsley was whispering things . . . just then she distinctly saw the brown hand of Tony touch the white one of Vera. Her head swam dizzily.

There was a wild upsetting of gift oranges into the basket as Vera smiled good-bye into Tony's eyes.

"Addios, signor," she murmured, and Myrtle gasped and jarred the other girl's elbow. "Come," she said.

There was a flash of white teeth, and a volley of impassioned Genoese followed them, farewells that might have come up from a gondola on the Grand

Canal. Vera looked back once to say, "Right away, Tony, plee-ee!" but Myrtle hurried her along.

"Oh, Vera, how could you?" she began; "that poor fellow's in love with you! That is why he sends us all those things for nothing! How perfectly dreadful!"

"Dreadful! Well, I like that. There you go again, taking things seriously!"

"But it's so cruel!"

"Cruel! My word! He's pleased to death at being treated like a human being, that's all! You see, I understand people, Myrtle. Now, I wouldn't act like that with a Norwegian or even a German. It makes all the difference—temperament does!"

But there was a coolness between the two girls after that. Myrtle partook no more of the gift fruits and Vera trilled operatic airs when conversation lagged. 'Manda alone was still contented and happy.

But one night Nature provided one of those universal levelers that adjust conditions and clear atmospheres. Vera, rising before dawn to investigate the sound of beating sleet against the window-pane, found a blizzard, the first touch of real Winter, in full blast.

"Heaven, but it's a wild night on the moors!" she ejaculated, with a shiver, closing the window and turning on all the radiators, while Myrtle moaned in her dreams.

In the morning the world outside was like a frosted Christmas-card, and the girls curled under downy covers, awaiting the sound of the faithful 'Manda's key in the door.

But she came not! And hunger began to gnaw at them, for they were healthy young persons. Even Myrtle liked her breakfast. There was nothing in the ice-box. The presence of 'Mandy had done away with the necessity of providing for contingencies.

Vera began to hurry, bathless, into a hasty outdoor toilette. "Me for a quick exit—R. U. E. to Tony's," she chuckled; "and if 'Manda comes—"

"But she won't," called out Myrtle from her pillows. "It was too good to last! Be sure to wear rubbers, Vera!"

These were the first civil words that had passed between the girls for days, and Vera plunged almost cheerfully into the snowy street, tacking with every few steps against the wind and snow toward Tony's familiar stand.

But it was desolate. A few loose boards slapped and rattled in the drifting snow across the closed cellar door. Something was wrong.

From behind the frosted panes of the grocery store near-by came Mr. Mulrooney, the proprietor.

"He's gawn," he said. "Would ye be likin' some canned peaches, or a jar of marmalade? He's gawn for good!"

"Gone!" spoke Vera. "Do you mean he's dead?"

Mulrooney grinned sardonically in the negative.

"Sure, thim dagos never lasht through a Winter! He wint lasht night whin the storm come up, and tuk all the things away in an expriss wagon. Ye won't see him now till the warm weather. They have no loongs, thim dagos! Would ye be wantin' some of thim puffy breakfast oats or some frish rolls this morning?"

Vera nodded blankly. "And cream—and eggs," she whispered. "The best eggs—please."

"Do you mean the sthtrictly frish or the new-laid?"

"The best!" she muttered. "Send them at once, please!"

When she reached the apartment Myrtle, wild-eyed, in a bath-robe, had the morning's mail in her lap. She handed Vera a letter in pencil on a half sheet of paper.

"Deer Missys," it said, "I am sik and can cum to work no more until the Spring. The doctor says I have apendeceetes. Good-bye. Manda."

Vera's lips set in a straight line as her eyes turned to the window where gusts of snow beat against the glass.

"Oh, tush!" she said; "we'll get a Swede or an Eskimo!"

But Myrtle looked up into Vera's eyes with a wan smile and put another letter she had opened into her hand.

"The Davidson-Gores," she said huskily, "are coming home tomorrow!"

And the dumb-waiter whistle blew fiercely as the two girls giggled hysterically in each other's arms.



'TIS PROOF ENOUGH

By Mary Hinman Paine

IF when you kiss you prate of faith,
 Ah, that would bring you direst blame.
 Do you in offering a pearl
 The value of your gift proclaim?

One moment's truth I only know,
 And that if mine speaks in your eyes.
 What crime then would be ours if we
 By words that moment jeopardize?

TO A BEE

By Edward Wilbur Mason

THOU Comet that dost flame among the flowers!
Around the roses like a wedding-ring
The orbit of thy flight doth ever swing,
And link with chain of light the golden hours.
I hear thy boom of thunder in the bowers
Where thou dost reign in gorgeous state a king;
Or, 'neath some fragrant leaf I see thee cling,
Safe-sheltered from the sudden Summer showers.

Small as thou art thy busy life is bright
With joy and labor; thou dost never grieve
The pleasures past or days of vagrance done;
But ever in the arras of delight,
Like the rapt lover on St. Agnes' Eve
Thou holdest tryst of beauty with the sun!



THE ETERNAL QUESTION

TO live within one's salary
Is hard—no one can doubt it.
But there's no doubt 'twere harder still
To try to live without it.



"**O**UR new cook is terribly absent-minded."
"I shouldn't think you'd care."
"And why not, pray?"
"She may forget to leave."



"**R**EMEMBER, my son, that health is wealth."
"But father—you forget that I'm going to be a doctor."



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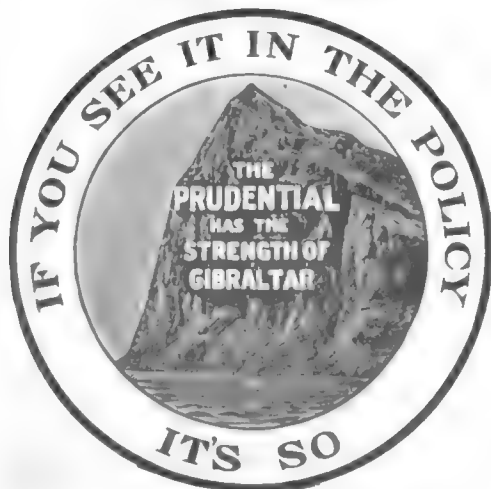
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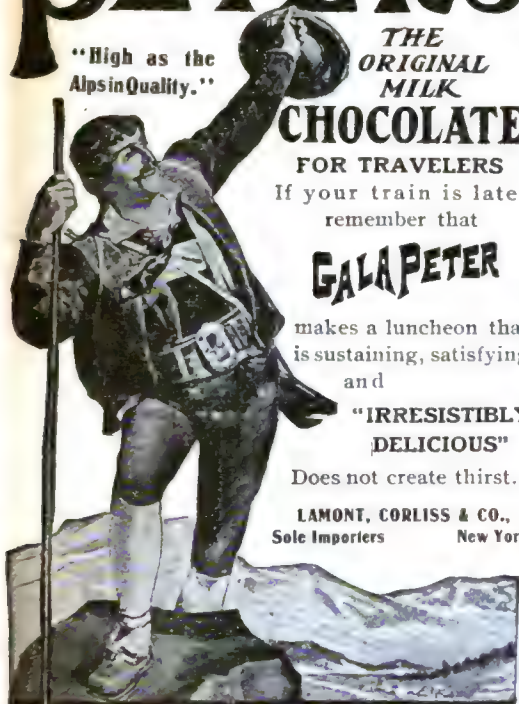
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